



## **Wallabout Cultural Resource Survey**

Report prepared for the  
Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project LDC  
Brooklyn, New York

Report Prepared by Andrew S. Dolkart

March 2005

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This project is funded by Preserve New York, a grant program of the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts

2005

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On behalf of the Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project LDC, in collaboration with community leaders from Wallabout, Clinton Hill, and Fort Greene, I would like to present the findings from a cultural resource survey of the Wallabout area of Northern Brooklyn. The study area encompasses 22 blocks north of Myrtle Avenue and south of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, between Carlton and Classon Avenues, and is characterized by a mix of wood, brick, and brownstone rowhouses, intermingled with an assortment of low-rise warehouses and large industrial complexes.

This architecturally significant collection of 19th century buildings is under intense development pressure as property values in the thriving residential neighborhoods of Fort Greene and Clinton Hill to the south continue to escalate and the companies within the Brooklyn Navy Yard to the north experience increased job growth. Already a number of noteworthy buildings are slated for demolition and two non-contextual residential complexes have been completed on Clermont Avenue, both of which threaten the integrity of the built environment.

I hope to see this historic assessment of the area serve as an important tool for the future planning and protection of Wallabout. I would like to thank the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts for their generous support of the Wallabout cultural resource survey through the Preserve New York grant program.

I would also like to thank architectural historian Andrew S. Dolkart, the holder of the James Marston Fitch Professorship in Historic Preservation at The Columbia University School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, for his dedication to this project, for his enthusiasm, and for his appreciation of the many historic assets we are fortunate enough to have surrounding us here on Myrtle Avenue in the adjacent neighborhoods of Wallabout, Fort Greene, and Clinton Hill.

Finally, I would like to thank Brooklyn Community Board 2, the Brooklyn Department of Buildings, and Council Member Tish James for their assistance and support throughout this project.



Michael Blaise Backer  
Executive Director

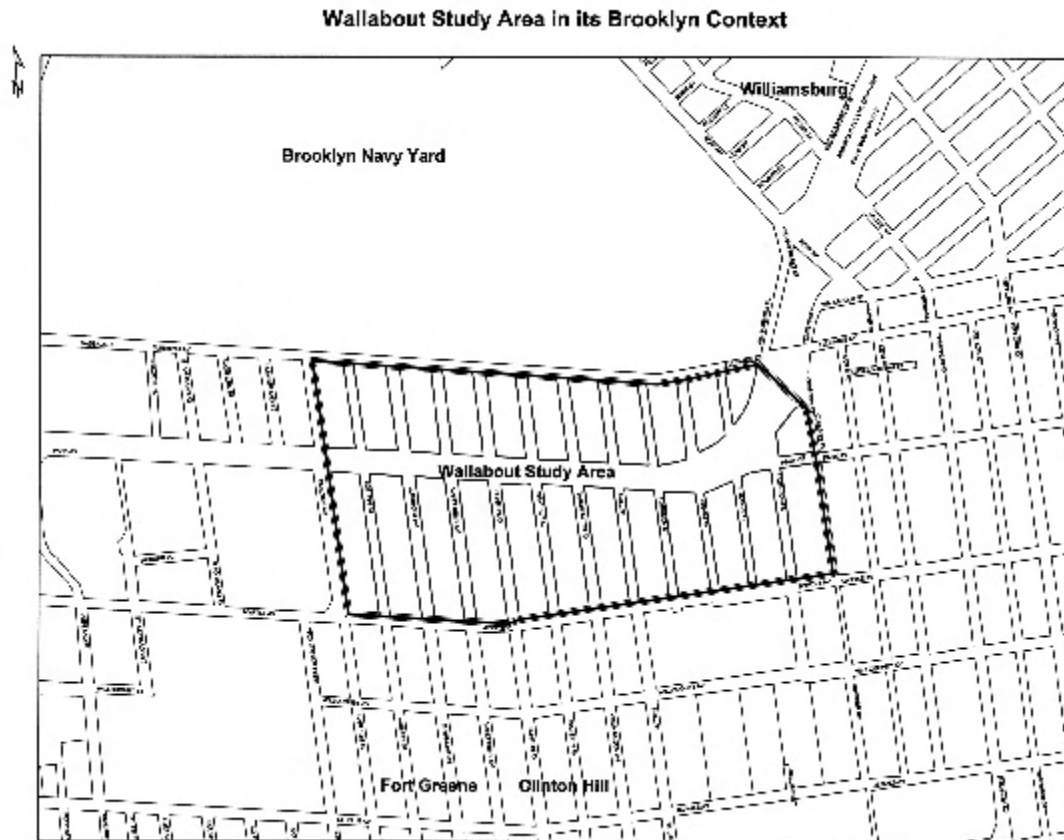
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#### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership is to restore the "Main Street" of the Fort Greene & Clinton Hill community to a bustling, economically vital neighborhood commercial corridor that provides entrepreneurial, cultural, recreational, and employment opportunities for all those who live, work, study or have an interest in the area.

# WALLABOUT CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

## INTRODUCTION



In August 2003, the Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project LDC received a Preserve New York grant from the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts in order to undertake a survey of the Wallabout section of Brooklyn. The survey area encompassed twenty-two blocks in northern Brooklyn, located immediately south of the former Brooklyn Navy Yard and immediately north of the Fort Greene and Clinton Hill neighborhoods, both of which have large historic districts. The survey area was two blocks wide, bounded on the north by Flushing Avenue and on the south by Myrtle Avenue, with Park Avenue and the elevated Brooklyn-Queens Expressway running through the center. On the east, the survey area was bounded by Classon Avenue; on the west, the survey area was bounded by Carlton Avenue. Running through the survey area are Adelphi Street, Clermont Avenue, Vanderbilt Avenue, Clinton Avenue, Waverly Avenue, Washington Avenue, Hall Street, Ryerson Street, Grand Avenue, Steuben Street, and Emerson Place. Although there is some intermixing of residential and commercial buildings in the study area, the blocks between Myrtle and Park Avenues consist primarily of residential buildings, largely

wood, brick, or brownstone-fronted single-family homes, plus a few tenements and apartment houses and, on the blocks farther east, a significant number of low-scale garages and factories. The area between Park and Flushing Avenues consists largely of brick or concrete industrial buildings with a few residential buildings and a church complex.

The historic survey was undertaken in order to create an important tool for future planning and preservation in the Wallabout area. This is a section of Brooklyn that has largely been ignored by the preservation community in recent years. Within the study area there is only one building, 136 Clinton Avenue, that has been designated as a landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. 136 Clinton Avenue is also listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, as is the Rockwood Chocolate Factory Historic District on Waverly and Washington Avenues between Park and Flushing Avenues. In the post-World War II period, especially after the Brooklyn Navy Yard was decommissioned in 1966, much of the building stock in the area deteriorated and/or was inappropriately altered. In more recent years, development pressures have threatened the integrity of the built fabric. This was made clear during the summer of 2004, while the survey was underway, when New York City announced that the vacant 1941 former Navy Recruitment Center, occupying most of the block bounded by Park, Flushing, Clermont and Vanderbilt Avenues, and which had, for many years been used as a prison, would be demolished and replaced by new housing.

## Methodology

The Wallabout Cultural Resource Survey was undertaken in the spring-fall of 2004 by architectural historian and preservationist Andrew S. Dolkart, holder of the James Marston Fitch Professorship and Associate Professor of Historic Preservation at the Columbia University School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. Professor Dolkart's work largely focuses on the architecture and development of New York City, with a special emphasis on the architecture of Brooklyn and Manhattan. He has had extensive experience working in Brooklyn, including writing the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's designation reports for the nearby Fort Greene and Clinton Hill Historic Districts. For the survey work, Professor Dolkart was assisted by Darby Noonan, a second year graduate student in Columbia's Historic Preservation Program. Jenny Fields, a joint degree student in Columbia's Historic Preservation and Urban Planning programs created the maps and undertook census research.

Initially, a reconnaissance survey of all of the blocks in the study area was undertaken. The character of each block was identified, including the building types, scale, materials, and cohesiveness of the block. Those blocks that appeared to have a large number of historic buildings were surveyed in more detail and each building was photographed. Research was undertaken on the history of the area and on individual buildings and building complexes.

Research was undertaken at the Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Collection, the Brooklyn Historical Society, the New York Public Library, Columbia University's Avery Library, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, and at the Brooklyn Buildings Department. Research was inhibited by the fact that most of the library collections of the Brooklyn Historical Society were unavailable. The society owns a large collection of deed transfer forms that are a useful tool for determining when speculative building occurred, especially since building records do not exist before the late 1860s and Brooklyn's real property conveyance records do not list addresses or lot numbers, making them virtually useless for research in development. These records will be a useful tool for additional future research. We would like to extend special thanks to Councilwoman Letitia James for facilitating our examination of the files at the Buildings Department.

A small section of the Wallabout Study Area had previously been surveyed for possible landmark designation. In 1973, the Fort Greene Landmarks Preservation Committee prepared an extensive report proposing a local historic district. This proposal included Carlton Avenue, Adelphi Street, Clermont Avenue, and Vanderbilt Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues, as well as the buildings fronting on Myrtle Avenue. In his "Rationale for the Designation of the Fort Greene Area as an Historic District," James Marston Fitch, founder of the Columbia University Historic Preservation Program, noted that these blocks are "outdoor architectural museums in themselves" (Proposal, p. II-2). In addition, in 1978, as part of a larger Brooklyn survey, the Landmarks Preservation Commission's professional staff proposed a small historic district in the area, centering on Vanderbilt Avenue. Unfortunately, when the Fort Greene Historic District was designated in 1978, the northern boundary was drawn primarily along Willoughby Avenue, extending only as far north as Myrtle Avenue to include all of Fort Greene Park. It did not include any properties on or north of Myrtle Avenue. In addition, the Landmark Commission's staff proposal for a Vanderbilt Avenue Historic District never proceeded past draft form. The Landmarks Preservation

Commission generously made their research material available for use in the completion of this survey.

The ultimate aim of the survey was to identify buildings and groups of buildings worthy of preservation efforts, notably those that could be recommended for designation as local individual landmarks or as historic districts and those that could be recommended for listing in the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places. Unfortunately, some of the area's built fabric has been seriously compromised over the years, with, for example, entire blocks of wooden houses almost totally covered in synthetic siding. There are, however, several extremely significant concentrations of architecturally and historically distinguished buildings in the study area, including both residential and industrial structures. Designation of these significant resources should be vigorously pursued.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As expected, the residential portion of the Wallabout Study Area, located between Myrtle and Park Avenues, was extremely interesting, with the largest concentration of pre-Civil War frame houses in New York City. Boundaries have been drawn for a proposed historic district extending from Clermont Avenue eastward to Washington Avenue, with possible extensions to the west onto Adelphi Street and Carlton Avenue (Extension I) and to the east onto Hall Street (Extension II). In addition, several extraordinary individual industrial buildings or clusters of industrial buildings have been identified for historic designation on the blocks between Park and Flushing Avenues: the proposed Mergenthaler Linotype Historic District on Hall Street, Ryerson Street, and Grand Avenue; the Van Glahn/Rockwood Historic District on Washington and Waverly Avenues; and the former Oxley, Giddings & Enos factory on Flushing Avenue between Carlton Avenue and Adelphi Street. Also worthy of historic designation is the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church complex, with its church, school, convent, and rectory on Clermont Avenue and Adelphi Street and the Italianate style brick rowhouses at 29-47 Vanderbilt Avenue with their extraordinary cast-iron entrance hoods.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF WALLABOUT

The history of development in the Wallabout area was influenced by the presence of the Brooklyn Navy Yard immediately to the north, by the waterfront expansion of the original settlement of Brooklyn as the population of the town and later the city increased during the nineteenth century, by the establishment of the Wallabout Market on former navy property in the late nineteenth century, and by the area's convenience to ferry lines, elevated rail lines, and bridges.

The history of the Wallabout Study Area can be traced back to 1624 when a group of Walloons, French-speaking Protestants from what is now Belgium, settled along the shore of a modest bay on the East River and named it *Waal-bogt*. A little over a decade later, Dutch settlers sought to establish legal title to the area by officially "purchasing" land from the Canarsee Indians. For example, in 1637 Joris Jansen de Rapalje purchased a tract near Wallabout Bay, although he did not settle on the land until the 1650s (Ment, 12-13; Landmarks, *Lefferts-Laidlaw*, 2). By the late seventeenth century, much of the area was owned by the Ryerson family. The area remained rural through the eighteenth century. It was probably used for farms and pasturage, with easy access to the waterfront. A few houses were clustered along the waterfront of Wallabout Bay or along Wallabout Road which ran through the blocks that are today between Park and Flushing Avenues. During the Revolutionary War, the British anchored prison ships in Wallabout Bay, burying the thousands of prisoners who died in shallow graves along the waterfront. Following the war, much of Wallabout was purchased by John Jackson, who, along with several relatives, opened a shipyard.

The initial settlement of Brooklyn (or Breuckelen) was located along the waterfront to the west, near present-day Fulton Street. This community was comprised almost entirely of modestly-scaled wooden houses, reproduced with great accuracy in the early nineteenth-century paintings and related



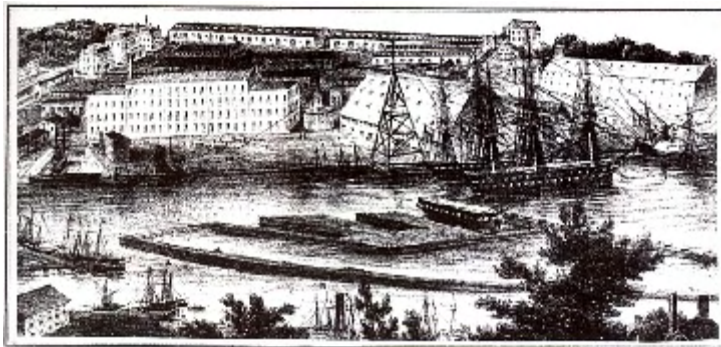
Francis Guy's View of Brooklyn, 1820 (From Stiles, p. 113)

prints of Francis Guy. Wallabout was too far east to be impacted by the development of the village of Brooklyn. However, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the population of Brooklyn began its rapid rise. This was largely due to the establishment of safe and reliable ferry service that permitted people to live in Brooklyn and commute to jobs in New York City across the East River. In 1810, Brooklyn's population was only 4,402. By 1820 it had risen to 7,175. In 1830 the population was 12,406, jumping to 36,233 in 1840, 96,838 in 1850, and 266,661 in 1860 (the later number includes the 1855 annexation of the city of Williamsburg). Brooklyn's population expanded so rapidly that the community was chartered as a city in 1834. The rapid population increase coincides with the initial residential development in Wallabout which took place in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s.

After 1830, much of Brooklyn's population growth was comprised of affluent families who settled in the substantial new rowhouses that were erected first in Brooklyn Heights and later in other

middle-class rowhouse communities, including South Brooklyn (now Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, and Boerum Hill), Clinton Hill (now Clinton Hill and Fort Greene), and Park Slope. However, development also expanded out of the old waterfront settlement of Brooklyn, moving eastward into Wallabout. Since the flatlands along the river were not considered to be as prestigious for residential development as the uplands several blocks inland, much of the construction in Wallabout continued to be wood houses rather than the more expensive brick or stone dwellings found a few blocks to the south in Fort Greene and Clinton Hill.

Additional impetus for the development of Wallabout came from the expansion of the United States government's Brooklyn Navy Yard along Wallabout Bay. The history of the Navy Yard can be



**UNITED STATES NAVY YARD, BROOKLYN, NEW-YORK**

United States Navy Yard, Brooklyn, c. 1850s (From Berner, p. 23)

traced back to the government's 1801 purchase, for \$40,000, of about forty acres of John Jackson's property on the bay. The purchase included Jackson's private shipyard which was incorporated into the government's new yard for the repair and supply of navy ships. The Navy Yard expanded slowly since there was little demand for war ships in the first half of the nineteenth century.

However, the navy did purchase additional land and began major building projects, including the construction of the

commandant's house in 1805-06, a naval hospital in 1830-38 (with later wings), and the first dry dock in 1840-51 (all three of these buildings are New York City landmarks). The Navy Yard employed an increasingly large number of men. Many commuted to work from New York City, but others settled in surrounding neighborhoods, including Vinegar Hill to the west and Wallabout. Census enumerations indicate that those with skills appropriate to Navy Yard work lived in Wallabout, but they were never a majority of local residents (census records do not indicate employer so it is not possible to know if someone was actually employed at the Navy Yard).

The presence of the Navy Yard, coupled with the expansion of Brooklyn's waterfront neighborhoods, resulted in extensive residential development along the streets of Wallabout in the decades between 1830 and 1860. This is clearly evident on the earliest atlas of Brooklyn, the Perris Map of 1855, which illustrates all of the buildings on the streets of Wallabout as far east as the western blockfronts of Clinton Avenue. This map shows a heavily built up community, largely comprising wooden homes of modest scale, but also including a significant number of brick or stone-fronted homes. Most of these buildings were single-family dwellings, but it is also probable that a number of these houses were inhabited by two or more households. In the decades following the Civil War, additional houses were erected in Wallabout, including a number of brownstone-fronted rows. More prominent, however, from this era, were tenements designed to house multiple families. Most of these date from the 1880s through the early twentieth century, just as the blocks to the north were becoming increasingly industrialized. The frame cottages, masonry rowhouses, and masonry tenements attracted a varied population. Most residents were American-born, but there was also a significant Irish community, as well as immigrants from elsewhere in Europe. The presence of Irish

and other residents from primarily Roman Catholic countries explains the presence of the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church complex on Clermont Avenue and Adelphi Street between Park and Flushing Avenues. Sacred Heart held its first mass in 1871, with its church building designed in 1874 and dedicated in 1877. Myrtle Avenue, at the south end of the study area, developed as a mixed-use street, with brick and stone buildings that had stores on the ground floor and apartments above. Many of these were erected in the same years as major residential construction on nearby blocks and served the commercial needs of local residents.

The most important change that occurred in Wallabout in the second half of the nineteenth century was the transformation of the blocks between Park and Flushing Avenues, immediately adjoining the Navy Yard, from residential streets to commercial and industrial streets, many lined with massive complexes. This redevelopment was part of the larger growth of industry in Brooklyn in the late nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century. By 1860, there were 1,032 industrial concerns in Brooklyn, employing 12,758 people. By 1890, there were 10,623 firms, fully one-sixth of the industrial concerns in all of New York State, with 93,275 workers. A 1909 article commented that “anyone who thinks Brooklyn is not a manufacturing center should read these figures and ponder.” The figures quoted for 1909 are:

- number of industrial establishments, 5,218
- industrial employees, 145,222
- proprietors and firm members, 5,495
- salaried employees (i.e., factory office workers), 15,844
- capital, \$362,337,000
- salaries and wage, \$89,474,000
- cost of materials, \$235,132,000
- value of products, \$417,223,000

By the early twentieth century, Brooklyn was the fourth largest manufacturing center in the entire country, with much of the industry clustered in neighborhoods along the East River waterfront, including Dumbo, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, and Wallabout.

The industrialization of the Wallabout blocks between Park and Flushing Avenues largely occurred between the 1880s and the 1920s. Industry thrived in the area because of its convenience to the waterfront, but also because of increasing accessibility, especially after the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883 and of the elevated railroad on Myrtle Avenue in 1888. One of the earliest major industrial buildings erected in the area was the brick factory on Flushing Avenue between Carlton Avenue and Adelphi Street built in 1886 for Oxley, Giddings & Enos, a manufacturer of gas fixtures. Many of the businesses that erected factories in Wallabout were involved in the production of food, including candy and baking firms and several grocery supply houses that erected processing plants



William Jürgens Grocery Warehouse, Flushing Avenue and Ryerson Street (From King, p. 33)

and cold storage warehouses. These businesses may have been attracted to the neighborhood by the establishment in the 1880s of Brooklyn's major produce market, the Wallabout Market, just north of Flushing Avenue between Washington Avenue and Ryerson Street. Permanent buildings for this market, designed by William Tubby, were erected in 1894-96. The largest and perhaps the most significant business that located in Wallabout was the Mergenthaler Linotype Company, one of Brooklyn's leading employers, which erected a major complex of buildings on Hall Street, Ryerson



Wallabout Market, 1934 (From Brooklyn Public Library, *Eagle* Collection)

Street, and Grand Avenue between 1907 and 1942. Several other large factory buildings, including those for the Consumers' Biscuit and Manufacturing Company, the Drake Brothers Bakery, and the Rockwood Chocolate Company, were also erected in Wallabout during the early years of the twentieth century.

The Navy Yard and neighborhoods adjoining it thrived during World War II and employment reached peak levels as manufacturing firms were refitted for war production. This is most evident at the Mergenthaler Linotype complex, where the Defense Plant Corporation in Washington, D.C. erected a large new factory

on Park Avenue between Ryerson Street and Grand Avenue in 1942, adjoining the firm's older buildings, and leased it to Mergenthaler. The Navy Yard also expanded beyond its borders in 1941, erecting a barracks building for new recruits on Clermont and Vanderbilt Avenues between Park and Flushing Avenues. Unfortunately, after World War II, the Wallabout neighborhood declined. The Navy Yard dwindled in importance, until it was finally closed in 1966. The naval barracks became a prison that was later abandoned. Most of the industrial concerns, employing thousands of people, closed or moved out of Brooklyn; Mergenthaler Linotype, for example, took its jobs to Long Island in 1959, while Drake Bakeries, moved from Clinton Avenue to New Jersey in 1977 (Snyder-Grenier, 161). Housing also deteriorated, with many of the older wooden homes resided with aluminum, vinyl, or synthetic shingles. Amazingly, despite this period of decline, much of the physical fabric of the area remains, with a large concentration of nineteenth-century homes on blocks between Myrtle and Park Avenues and many major factory complexes still standing between Park and Flushing Avenues.

## STREETSCAPES

The following is a description and analysis of each streetscape in the Wallabout Study Area. These are arranged in two groups – the largely residential streets between Myrtle and Park Avenues, followed by the largely industrial streets between Park and Flushing Avenues. Each entry includes both sides of the street. The entries include a description of the character of each street, as well as a discussion of the architecture and any known historical significance. Note that some of the industrial and other complexes extend through the block or expand onto more than one block. The history of each complex will be discussed on the street with the front elevation or where the major buildings of the complex are located. The entries will also note whether the block appears to be eligible for inclusion in a historic district or whether buildings are eligible for designation as individual structures.

### Wallabout Study Area Blocks Between Myrtle Avenue and Park Avenue

#### *Carlton Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues*



133 Carlton Avenue



Brooklyn Garden Apartments, 101-111 Carlton Avenue

Only the east side of Carlton Avenue is within the Wallabout Study Area; the west side of the street was cleared for construction of the Fort Greene Houses (Whitman/Ingersoll Houses) during World War II. Most of the housing on this block is of frame construction, with a few brick houses and brownstone-fronted houses. The block also has several vacant lots and a large apartment house complex that extends through the block to Adelphi Street. It is not one of the more cohesive blocks in the study area, although it does contain several buildings of interest. The most interesting house on the block is No. 133, a shingle-sided building, probably erected in the 1840s, that retains its original Greek Revival porch with Corinthian columns. Although somewhat out of character in an area of small houses, the most significant building on the street is the apartment house at 101-111 Carlton Avenue. This building is on a lot that stretches through the block and includes the building at 100-108 Adelphi Street. These buildings are model apartments erected by Brooklyn Garden Apartments, Inc., a limited-dividend company established by prominent housing reformer Louis H. Pink to provide well-planned, air- and light-filled apartments to working people at moderate rents.

The complex was apparently built in two campaigns. The earliest buildings, on Carlton and Adelphi were designed in 1930 by Brooklyn architect Frank H. Quimby using a textured over-burned brick that was popular in New York during the 1920s and early 1930s. The buildings, which occupy only 57.5% of the lot area, have large landscaped courts with all apartments accessed through the courtyards. The Carlton Avenue frontage appears to have been extended to the south in 1932; local architect W. T. McCarthy seamlessly continued Quimby's facade. This blockfront has been included in a possible extension to the proposed Wallabout Historic District.

#### *Adelphi Street between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

The west side of this street contains a mix of brick and frame houses as well as the Adelphi Street wing of the Brooklyn Garden Apartments (see Carlton Avenue) and a few early twentieth-century tenements. The most notable house on the block is the Greek Revival home at No. 124, probably erected c.1840, which retains its columned porch and small attic windows. The east side of the street, extending through the block to Clermont Avenue, is dominated by P. S. 46, the Edward C. Blum School, designed in 1957 by Katz, Waisman, Blumenkranz, Stein, Weber and published in *Architectural Record* in October 1961. This firm, later known as Architects Associated, was a



P. S. 46, The Edward C. Blum School, Adelphi Street

prominent proponent of Modernism in post-World War II New York. They also designed Coney Island Hospital (1952-57) and William E. Grady Vocational High School (1955-56; now William E. Grady High School), also in Brooklyn. The firm is especially notable for its time, in that two of its principals were women – Taina Waisman and Read Weber. P. S. 46 is an interesting example of Modern school design erected at a time when the Board of Education was hiring outside architects to design new buildings as part of a major modernization and expansion of school facilities. Five intact Neo-Grec style, brownstone-fronted rowhouses, designed by William C. Russell, two in 1876 and three in 1879, stand to the south of the school. To the north is a

cluster of frame and brick houses dating from the 1850s and 1860s. This street has been included in a possible extension to the proposed Wallabout Historic District.

*Clermont Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

This block of Clermont Avenue retains a significant collection of early houses, dating from the decades prior to the Civil War. Although most of the houses have undergone some form of alteration, there is a great deal of original fabric extant and the houses retain their original scale. The west side of the street is dominated by P. S. 46 (see Adelphi Street), with older houses to the north and south, while the east side retains a larger group of pre-Civil War houses, with a few later residential structures. The houses on the east side of the street retain significant Greek Revival and Italianate style features, including original entrance enframements (Nos. 75, 77, 141), original window enframements (Nos. 75, 77, 81), original doors (No. 83), columned porches (No. 77, 105, 109, 111), and denticulated and/or bracketed cornices (Nos. 77, 83, 139, 140, 141). Several of these houses have later cornices, in the Neo-Grec style, added in the 1870s or early 1880s.



141 Clermont Avenue



77 Clermont Avenue porch

Nos. 135 and 137 are a pair of Gothic Revival style houses with gable fronts facing the street, erected in 1852 for Frederick Stallknecht. Although these houses have been altered, as late as 1978 original board-and-batten siding was visible on the north facade of No. 137. Sadly, two other Gothic Revival houses erected for Stallknecht, at Nos. 119-121 Clermont Avenue, have been demolished. The demolition of this rare pair of houses, as well as some unfortunate alterations to the homes at Nos. 135-137 argue for landmark designation so that these losses can be stemmed and restoration work can increasingly become a part of the evolution of the area. Another especially intriguing house stands at 123 Clermont Avenue. This Italianate style brick house was erected as a two-story dwelling in c. 1850, but received a third story in 1892, designed by John McKeefrey. It is probably at this time that the porch, with its turned colonettes and spandrels ornamented with perforated trefoils; the pressed-metal cornice ornamented with swags; and the iron railings were added.



135-137 Clermont Avenue



123 Clermont Avenue



93 Clermont Avenue

Among the later buildings of note on this block are the pair of simple brick houses with Neo-Grec cornices at 79 and 79A Clermont Avenue, designed in 1878 by John C. Rustin and the Queen Anne style red brick tenement at No. 93 designed in 1889 by Rudolphe L. Daus, one of Brooklyn's leading late nineteenth-century architects (Daus was, for example, the architect of the landmark Lincoln Club at 65 Putnam Avenue). This house is trimmed with ornamental terra-cotta blocks and retains its original entrance hood and iron railings. The eastern blockfront of Clermont Avenue is included within the boundaries of the proposed Wallabout Historic District. The western blockfront has been included in a possible extension to the proposed district.

#### *Vanderbilt Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

This street, with its significant concentration of early wood and brick houses and its important row of brownstone-fronted houses, is the heart of the proposed historic district. The survival of early details and the cohesive quality of this block, marred only by a row of modern infill buildings at Nos. 95-115, create a memorable streetscape. The street fronts along Vanderbilt Avenue retain a significant number of houses that were erected in the 1830s, 1840s, and early 1850s; indeed, many of the extant houses appear on the insurance map of the area prepared by William Perris in 1855. One of the earliest houses in the area stands at No. 73, erected in the early 1830s. This is a transitional house with Federal style doorway detail and Greek Revival window enframements and attic windows. Many houses on the block display Greek Revival details, including columned porches, eared window enframements, and small rectangular attic windows. However, the most unusual buildings on the block are the Gothic Revival and Italianate style houses with gable fronts facing the street. Nos. 117-121 (early 1850s) are an extraordinary trio of Gothic Revival style brick houses with quatrefoil frieze, gingerbread bargeboard (at No. 117), drip lintels, angled bays, and

pointed-arch ironwork. The Italianate style is evident at Nos. 123-125 (c.1854) and Nos. 128-132 (c.1853). Although they do not have gabled fronts, the unusual Italianate style brick houses at Nos. 127-131 (c.1854), retain arched openings and columned porches.



71-73 Vanderbilt Avenue



117-121 Vanderbilt Avenue



127-131 Vanderbilt Avenue



80-86 Vanderbilt Avenue

A small amount of construction occurred on Vanderbilt Avenue later in the nineteenth century. The most significant of these buildings is the row of five neo-Grec style brownstone-fronted rowhouses at 80-86 Vanderbilt Avenue erected in 1878. These are the earliest known houses erected on speculation by the Pratt family. Charles Pratt and his son, Charles Millard Pratt, were important builders in Brooklyn, commissioning a number of rowhouses and small apartment buildings in the later part of the nineteenth century as speculative ventures. The Pratts favored certain architects for their building commissions – notably E. L. Roberts, Lamb & Rich, and William Tubby -- commissioning them to design their own mansions, buildings at Pratt Institute, churches, and speculative housing. Charles Pratt was Brooklyn's wealthiest resident in the late nineteenth century. He lived at 232 Clinton Avenue, just south of Willoughby Avenue in an austere Neo-Grec style house designed in 1874 by Ebenezer L. Roberts. Roberts designed several buildings for Pratt, including the Washington Avenue Baptist Church, the first section of the Emmanuel Baptist Church, and these five rowhouses. Their austere facades, with stylized, angular brackets at the entrance enframements, are reminiscent of the design at the larger Pratt mansion. The houses have especially notable ironwork at their areaways and on their stoops. Both sides of this street have been included in the proposed Wallabout Historic District.

#### *Clinton Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

In 1833, John Spader, a descendant of the Ryerson family which had acquired much of Wallabout and Clinton Hill in the late seventeenth century, and Manhattan auctioneer George W. Pine joined forces to develop Spader's property centering on Clinton Avenue. In an attempt to maximize his profits from real estate sales, Spader laid out Clinton Avenue as an especially wide, tree-lined street



Lefferts-Laidlaw House, 136 Clinton Avenue

that, he hoped, would attract buyers who would erect substantial houses. Indeed, in its initial phase of development, Clinton Avenue attracted affluent residents who erected suburban villas that were set back from the lot line and were surrounded by lawns and gardens. Although most of these villas were located on the blocks south of Myrtle Avenue, several large wooden homes were erected on the west side of Clinton Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues. As urban development increased in the area in the latter half of the nineteenth century, many of the early villas were demolished. Fortunately, several still stand on the west side of Clinton Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues. The most significant of

these is the Lefferts-Laidlaw House at 136 Clinton Avenue, a temple-fronted Greek Revival style house erected c. 1836-40. This is the only official New York City landmark in the study area. Other substantial early houses include the wooden building at No. 128 with its Italianate style cornices and the brick house at No. 116, both of which predate 1855. There are also several smaller wood or brick houses, on both sides of the street, that are set back from the lot lines. However, later construction extends right to the lot line, including a row of five neo-Grec style, brownstone-fronted houses designed in 1884 by Brooklyn architect Robert Dixon at Nos. 125-133.

As the Wallabout neighborhood became increasingly industrial, several individual tenements and rows of tenements were erected on this block of Clinton Avenue. In 1880, architect C. B. Sheldon designed a row of five brownstone-fronted tenements at Nos. 78-86. However, the most striking tenements on the block are the three Queen Anne buildings at Nos. 88, 90, and 94. These were designed by Parfitt Brothers, English-immigrant architects who were responsible for many of Brooklyn's most important buildings in the Queen Anne style. These red brick tenements are highlighted with superb terra-cotta detail, notably at the round-arched entrances with their ornate foliate detail and fierce monster heads.



128 Clinton Avenue



88-92 Clinton Avenue



88 Clinton Avenue entrance

Although most of the area's industrial development took place north of Park Avenue, a few factories were erected on the blocks to the south. In 1913-14, **Drake Brothers** baking company built a five-



Drake Brothers Bakery, 77 Clinton Avenue

story, fireproof, reinforced-concrete factory with arts-and-crafts-inspired brick facade at 77 Clinton Avenue. The building was designed by Dodge & Morrison, an architectural firm best known in Brooklyn for its churches. Drake began as a small bakery, but, by the early twentieth century was one of the largest commercial cake bakers in the northeast. According to *Bakers Weekly*, the Brooklyn plant produced fifteen tons of pound cake per day (8 August 1914, 39). The building was designed so that cake ingredients would be mixed on the fourth floor before being sent up one story to ovens. From here the cakes moved down for packaging on the third floor and shipping on the lower floors. The building was also equipped with a rooftop laundry where the worker's white uniforms were cleaned daily. The company's offices were on the second floor. The building was extended eastward to Waverly Avenue in 1924-25. Both sides of this street have been included in the proposed Wallabout Historic District.

#### *Waverly Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues*



67-87 Waverly Avenue

Waverly Avenue is historically a less prestigious street than either Clinton Avenue or Washington Avenue, located to the east and west. This block of Waverly Avenue has a mix of buildings, with early residential structures to the north and less interesting buildings to the south. Thus, only half of the western blockfront and about three-quarters of the eastern blockfront are included in the potential historic district. The west side of the street contains a cohesive group of early Italianate style houses, probably dating from about 1850, including several with their entrance lintels capped by a cupid's bows. Nos. 67-87 Waverly Avenue form a row of Anglo-Italianate houses (c.1860), with English basements, entrances close to sidewalk level, rusticated brownstone bases, brick superstructures, and wood cornices.

### *Washington Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

Development along this section of Washington Avenue occurred over a period of about four decades. The earliest houses display Greek Revival details, probably dating from the 1830s,



Washington Avenue, east side between Myrtle and Park Avenues

evident, for example, at No. 166, with its battered and eared entrance enframement and denticulated cornice. Much of the street is lined with mid-nineteenth-century Italianate style brick rowhouses. Neo-Grec rows, dating from 1879, are the latest major buildings on the block. Unfortunately there have been a number of alterations on the street, but it retains its nineteenth century scale and restoration of the facades could easily return the block to its earlier character. Both sides of this street have been included in the proposed Wallabout Historic District.

### *Hall Street between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

Hall Street between Myrtle and Park Avenues is solidly built up with residential buildings, most of wood construction, with a few brick structures. Almost all of the houses pre-date the Civil War. From the perspective of historic district designation, this is one of the more problematic blocks in the area. While the buildings are old and the historic scale is extant, the integrity of the facades has been largely compromised. Although a few houses have wood shingles on their facades, almost every house has been resided with aluminum or vinyl. Of special note on the block are the surviving entrance hoods supported by scroll brackets, seen, for example, at Nos. 107, 109, and 113. One of the most unusual houses in Wallabout is 111 Hall Street, probably erected in the 1850s. The two-story and raised basement house has a typical Italianate style bracketed cornice. The facade, however, is defined by two-story tall, multi-pane sash windows with Tudor-arch tops. This facade, almost entirely glass, is unique in New York City. The ironwork on the centrally-placed stoop and on the areaway appears to date from the 1880s or 1890s. While it is possible that this facade is original, it is probably part of an alteration that also included a new stoop and ironwork. Both sides of this street have been included in a possible extension to the Wallabout Historic District.

### *Ryerson Street between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

This street consists of groups of Italianate style rowhouses with brick or brownstone facades, largely sited close to Park Avenue, and wooden houses with resided facades. Most of the buildings on the block appear to date from the 1850s. One house on the block is of special historic interest. This is No. 99, thought to be the only surviving New York City home of poet Walt Whitman. The house, with its resided facade, was the subject of an article in the *New Yorker* in June 1995.

### *Grand Avenue between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

East of Ryerson Street, Wallabout becomes increasingly industrial and commercial, with groups of modestly-scaled garages, factories, and warehouses of marginal significance. This block of Grand

Avenue is lined primarily with one- and two-story, early twentieth-century garages, with a few larger industrial buildings and modest residential structures. The only structure of interest on the block is the one-story garage, designed by Parker & Parker in 1920, at 82-94 Grand Avenue. The brick on the facade of this building is quite unusual, with white, glazed headers and blue-tinted stretchers. Although the owner of the building when erected is listed as Waterside Holding Co., it appears to have either been built for or soon leased to Borden's Farm Products.

*Steuben Street between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

This street has a mix of nineteenth-century tenements and primarily twentieth-century industrial buildings and garages. The block has no notable architectural character.

*Emerson Place between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

This block contains an incoherent mix of mostly low-scale garages and factories, mostly dating from the first half of the twentieth century. The most interesting building on the block is the six-story factory designed in 1920 by the prominent Brooklyn firm of Helmle & Corbett for the Rigney Candy Company, at 68-74 Emerson Place. This reinforced-concrete factory was erected by the Turner Construction Company, a local firm that specialized in concrete construction.

*Classon Avenue, west side between Myrtle and Park Avenues*

This blockfront is lined with an undistinguished mix of factories, garages, and residential buildings. The major building on the block is a two-story garage erected for the M. H. Renken Dairy Company. This company had its headquarters in an exceptionally interesting building located just outside of the study area at 584 Myrtle Avenue, on the southwest corner of Classon Avenue. Both the headquarters building and the garage were designed by Koch & Wagner.

*Myrtle Avenue, north side, between Carlton and Classon Avenues*

The stretch of Myrtle Avenue in the study area contains a mix of historic buildings, modern buildings, and vacant lots. Although there are a few buildings of interest on the north side of the street, the blockfronts here are not as strong as those on the south side. Most of the historic buildings that survive are three or four story structures with storefronts on the ground floor and apartments above. Some of these appear to date back to the 1830s, such as the Greek Revival structures at 347-351, between Carlton Avenue and Adelphi Street. Elsewhere are mid-nineteenth-century Italianate and French Second Empire style buildings, such as those that line the blockfront between Vanderbilt and Clinton Avenues. All or part of the blockfronts between Clermont and Vanderbilt Avenues, Vanderbilt and Clinton Avenues, and Waverly and Washington Avenues are included in the proposed Wallabout Historic District. All or part of the blockfronts between Carlton Avenue and Adelphi Street and Adelphi Street and Clermont Avenue are included in a possible extension to this proposed historic district.



347-351 Myrtle Avenue

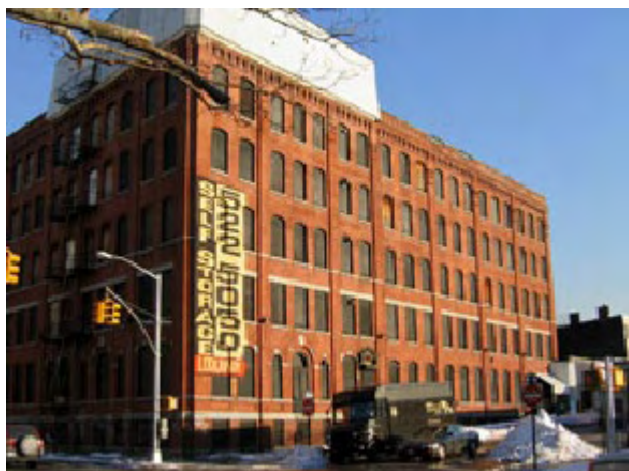
## Wallabout Study Area Blocks Between Park Avenue and Flushing Avenue

### *Park Avenue, north side between Clinton and Vanderbilt Avenues*

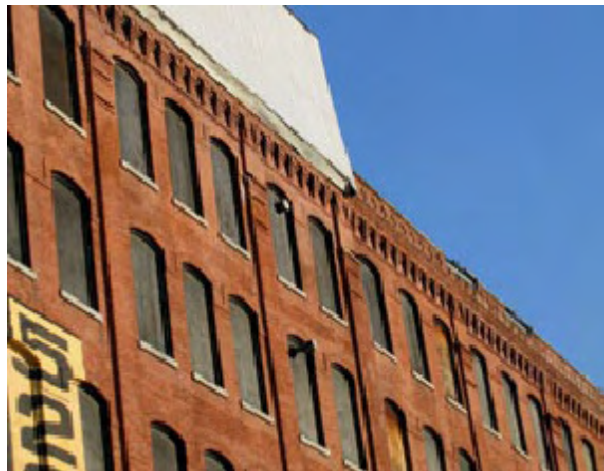
This is one of the few blockfronts on Park Avenue that retains a semblance of its former character as a residential street. Nos. 223-229 are four early, peak-roof, wooden houses, possibly dating from the 1830s.

### *Carlton Avenue, east side between Park and Flushing Avenues*

This blockfront consists of a mix of vacant lots and modest residential buildings that have been altered. The most significant building is located at the corner of Flushing Avenue, extending most of the length of Flushing Avenue, eastward towards Adelphi Street. This is the factory designed in 1886 for the gas fixtures company **Oxley, Giddings & Enos**. This company transferred its manufacturing operations to Brooklyn in 1888 from a factory on Canal Street in Manhattan. At the time, two of the three partners lived in Brooklyn – Charles F. Oxley on Monroe Place in Brooklyn Heights and Silas M. Giddings on State Street in Boerum Hill (Alanson T. Enos lived on West 59<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City). The factory is a brick building with stone trim, particularly unusual in its use of Victorian Gothic banded arches at the openings near the main corner entrances, and for its expressive brickwork, including brick corbeling and recessed window spandrels. The factory was designed by William Field & Son. Although little is known about the members of this firm, it was responsible for a number of important buildings in Brooklyn and Manhattan, most notably, the Home (1876) and Tower (1878) model tenements on Hicks Street and the small workers houses on Warren Place in the Cobble Hill Historic District. This factory building has been proposed for individual landmark designation.



Oxley, Giddings & Enos Factory, Carlton and Flushing Avenues



Oxley, Giddings & Enos Factory cornice detail

*Adelphi Street between Park and Flushing Avenues*

Adelphi Street contains a mix of altered houses, tenements, a former commercial stable, and the rectory and school of the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church (see Clermont Avenue).

*Clermont Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues*

The west side of Clermont Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues is dominated by the facade of the **Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart**. This Victorian Gothic style church is part of a full church complex, consisting of a convent on Clermont Avenue and a rectory and parochial school on Adelphi. The parish of the Sacred Heart was established by Brooklyn's bishop John McLoughlin in 1871 and first celebrated mass in a small chapel on Vanderbilt Avenue. By 1874, the Roman Catholic population in the area, largely comprised of working-class Irish households, had grown to the extent that a large church was needed. Construction began on the church building on May 10, 1874 and it was dedicated on June 24, 1877 (Stiles, p. 1057). The brick church, with its banded brick and stone arches, steeply sloping roof, full clerestory, and corner tower was designed by Thomas F. Houghton, a major designer of Catholic churches in Brooklyn during the second half of the nineteenth century. Houghton also designed the French Second Empire style, mansard-roofed rectory, located behind the church on Adelphi Street in 1876. In 1887 Houghton designed the Sacred Heart Institute building, also on Adelphi Street. This third-story red brick building is anchored by a corner tower and ornamented with a stone band, carved with the school's name, and with terra-cotta trim, including two three-story roundels, one with the bust of a boy and one with the bust of a girl. Houghton may also have been the architect of the more academic Gothic style convent, located just north of the church building. The entire church complex has been proposed for individual landmark designation.



Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church,  
Clermont Avenue



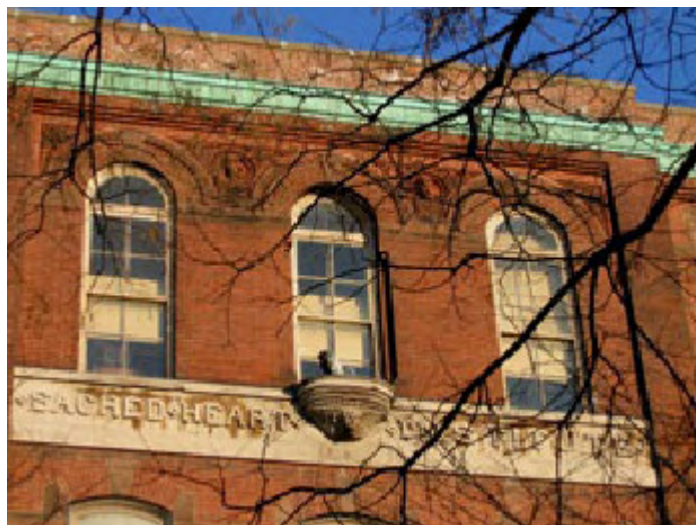
Sacred Heart Rectory, Adelphi Street



Sacred Heart Convent, Clermont Avenue



Sacred Heart Institute, Adelphi Street



Sacred Heart Institute, Adelphi Street detail

On the east side of Clermont Avenue, extending through the block to Vanderbilt Avenue, is the former United States Navy Receiving Barracks. This building was erected in 1941 at a time when the number of recruits and draftees entering the Navy was rapidly increasing. The older facilities at the Navy Yard could not accommodate all of the new recruits. This brick and stucco building was erected to house new recruits. The building, a fine example of Federal architecture of the Depression/War years, is massed with twelve interconnected pavilions along Clermont and Vanderbilt Avenues and the main entrance on Flushing Avenue. After World War II, the building was converted into a federal prison that, in recent years held those violating the nation's immigration laws. By the early twenty-first century the structure was vacant and in 2004 the city announced that it would be demolished and replaced by housing.



United States Navy Receiving Barracks, Flushing Avenue entrance facade



United States Navy Receiving Barracks, Clermont Avenue facade

*Vanderbilt Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues*

The west side of Vanderbilt Avenue is occupied by the former United States Navy Receiving Barracks discussed on Clermont Avenue.

The most significant buildings on the street are the rowhouses on the east side, at 29-47 Vanderbilt Avenue. This row of three-story and raised basement Italianate style brick houses was probably erected in the 1850s. The entrance to each house was originally capped by an extraordinary cast-iron lintel with an ornate, rococo crown. Most of these survive, as do all of the stoops and much other original detail. The detailing on this row appears to be unique in Brooklyn and the entire row should be designated as a landmark.



29-47 Vanderbilt Avenue



43 Vanderbilt Avenue doorway

Elsewhere on the east side of the block are a few additional residential buildings, including a brick Greek Revival style house at No. 23 and a transitional Greek Revival/Italianate style shingled house at No. 25. Farther north are several undistinguished twentieth-century garages.

*Clinton Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues*

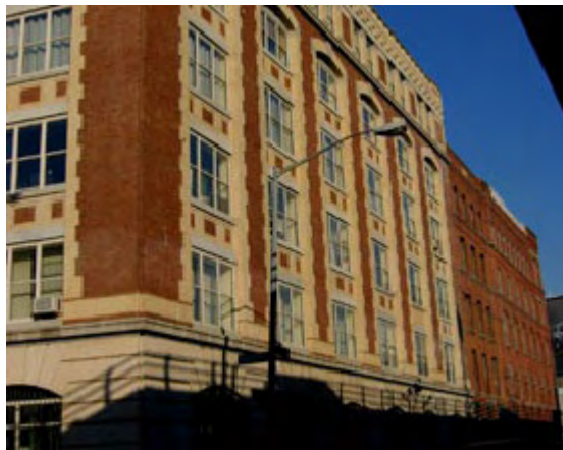
This section of Clinton Avenue is largely industrial. The street is lined primarily with one-story garages and vacant lots. The garage at 35-37 Clinton Avenue was built in 1920 for **Drake Bakeries**; like Drake's factory on Clinton Avenue, just south of Park Avenue, this garage was designed by Dodge and Morrison. Another garage was erected for Drake Bakeries in 1927 at 41-43 Clinton Avenue through to Waverly Avenue, designed by Fougner & Gautier, engineers. There are two three-story factories at the south end of the block. At the corner of Park Avenue, stretching eastward to Waverly Avenue, is the **Empire Pipe Bending and Supply Company** designed by Frank Quimby in 1906. The **Consumers' Biscuit Manufacturing Company** factory, designed by William J. Diltney in 1915 is located at 45-53 Clinton Avenue. The biscuit company building was published in *Architecture and Building* magazine in May 1919 because, the author believed, it "is so unique and original in design, as to warrant special study and attention" ("Consumers' Biscuit,"

45). The building was consciously designed to be an ornament in the neighborhood. Thus, a lively facade was created by contrasting grey brick with red brick and limestone trim. The building has a reinforced concrete structure that created relatively open, fireproof floors that accommodated four large cake ovens. Although the facade is largely intact it has been badly painted. These buildings could be included within a Wallabout Industrial Historic District, extending eastward to Grand Avenue

*Waverly Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues*

The west side of Waverly Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues has a mix of one to four-story industrial buildings. The major building on the block, located at No. 30, is the former home of the **Empire Biscuit Company**. This is a four-story reinforced-concrete building erected by the Turner Construction Company in 1921. Turner was the major firm involved with the construction of concrete factories in Brooklyn during the early decades of the twentieth century.

The east side of the street is lined with buildings erected as part of the **Rockwood & Company** cocoa and chocolate factory. The entire blockfront, with the exception of the vacant lot on the corner of Flushing Avenue, is within the boundaries of the National Register-listed Rockwood Chocolate Factory Historic District. The district also includes much of the western blockfront of Washington Avenue. The complex includes a series of buildings erected by Rockwood, one of the largest chocolate manufacturing and cocoa processing firms in America, between 1910 and the 1920s, as well as several earlier buildings erected for other businesses and later purchased by Rockwood. The most significant of these are buildings erected for the Van Glahn Brothers Wholesale Grocery on Washington Avenue (see Washington Avenue). Rockwood & Company was founded in Manhattan in 1886 by W. E. Rockwood and W. T. Jones. As the firm grew it needed more space than was available in Manhattan and in 1904 leased the Van Glahn grocery warehouse and other Van Glahn buildings on Washington Avenue, extending northward from Park Avenue. In 1910, Rockwood commissioned a new factory on the northeast corner of Waverly Avenue and Park Avenue from the prominent Brooklyn architectural firm of Parfitt Brothers (architect of the tenements at 88-94 Clinton Avenue). Curiously, Ernest Flagg, one of America's preeminent



Rockwood & Company Factory, Park Avenue facade

architects of the early twentieth century, was co-designer, responsible for the first-floor windows and the showroom. The building, with its reinforced-concrete floors was erected by the Turner Construction Company. The factory is a six-story structure faced in red brick with white limestone and yellow brick trim. Large bronze "R"s are set between the bays on the third story of the Waverly Avenue elevation. Reporting on the ground breaking for the building, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted that it was "the largest factory in New York City and State, also one of the largest in the country devoted exclusively to the manufacture of chocolate" (12 June 1910, sec. 2, 7). The firm was successful at this location and added several smaller buildings over the next decade so that it could complete the entire task of turning raw

cocoa beans into finished chocolate and cocoa products, including cocoa, cocoa butter, industrial chocolate, baking chocolate, and such candy bars as “pecan feast” and “Rockwood bits.” In 1913, Rockwood employed 165 people – 106 men, thirty-eight women, and six children on the factory floor, and fifteen office workers (*Industrial Directory*, 355). By the 1950s, Rockwood was second only to Hershey as the major manufacturer of chocolate in America, with branch factories located across the country. The firm faltered in the 1950s and closed in 1957. The company was sold to Sweets Corporation of America (manufacturer of Tootsie Rolls) which reopened the factory, employing 700 people. The factory finally closed for good in 1967.

Besides the main factory, the Rockwood buildings on Waverly Avenue are:

13-15 Waverly Avenue, a stable designed by Walter B. Wills for Henry Van Glahn and later purchased by Rockwood,  
17-19 Waverly Avenue (c.1900), considered a noncontributing building in the National Register district,  
21-23 Waverly Avenue (c.1920),  
25-29 Waverly Avenue (c.1920),  
31-35 Waverly Avenue (c.1920),  
39-41 Waverly Avenue (Lockwood Greene Architects and Engineers, 1919) – this storage building is an addition to 43-45 Waverly Avenue, and  
43-45 Waverly Avenue (Lockwood Green Architects and Engineers, 1917). The Lockwood Greene firm designed this storage building and its extension as additions to the original Rockwood factory on the corner of Waverly and Park Avenues. [For a discussion of Lockwood Greene, see the Mergenthaler Linotype Complex on Ryerson Street.]

All of the Rockwood buildings on Waverly Avenue are within the Van Glahn/Rockwood Historic District that is being proposed for New York City landmark designation. Both sides of the street could also be part of a larger Wallabout Industrial Historic District extending from Clinton Avenue to Grand Avenue.

#### *Washington Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues*

The west side of Washington Avenue is dominated by a series of well-designed buildings erected by the **Van Glahn Brothers** grocery businesses and later acquired by **Rockwood & Company** cocoa and chocolate manufacturers or erected by Rockwood itself. These buildings are located within the Rockwood Chocolate Company National Register Historic District. Van Glahn Brothers was one of several large grocery supply businesses that thrived in Brooklyn in the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. Brooklyn was well situated for grocery wholesale businesses which needed large buildings, employed large numbers of workers to manufacture, package, and ship products, and relied on convenient shipping for both raw materials and finished products. Thus, several grocery businesses settled near the Brooklyn waterfront and near the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Williamsburg Bridges. Besides Van Glahn, large wholesale grocery businesses in Brooklyn included E. Le Grand Beers in Wallabout, the Charles William Stores and the Grand Union Company, in Dumbo, and Austin Nichols in Williamsburg. Washington Avenue and nearby streets were especially good sites for grocery businesses, not only because of the convenience of the waterfront, bridges, and elevated rail lines, but also because the Wallabout Market, Brooklyn’s

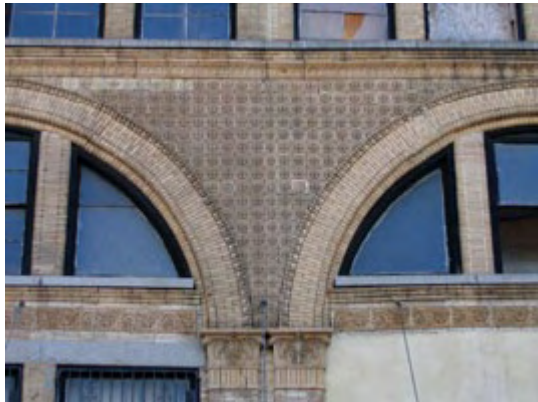


Van Glahn Brothers, corner Washington Avenue and Park Avenue

major produce market, was located just north of Flushing Avenue. John and Henry Van Glahn commissioned their grocery warehouse, located on the northwest corner of Washington Avenue and Park Avenue, in 1890. It was designed by the prolific Brooklyn architect John G. Glover. The five-story building, designed in the Romanesque Revival style, has a chamfered corner emblazoned with a terra-cotta panel inscribed with the company's name in elegant script. The building was altered in 1907 by Parfitt Brothers after it was acquired for use by Rockwood & Company. The building has been converted into housing.

Other buildings on Washington Avenue located within the National Register historic district are:

- 54-58 Washington Avenue (c.1900), a brick building with cast-iron lintels and sills,
- 60-64 Washington Avenue (John G. Glover, 1891-92), three Romanesque Revival style brick buildings,
- 66-68 Washington Avenue (John G. Glover, 1892-93), a Romanesque Revival style brick building, and
- 78 Washington Avenue (Lockwood Greene Architects and Engineers, 1917). This narrow street frontage is part of the wider building located at 43-45 Waverly Avenue.



50-52 Washington Avenue, terra-cotta detail

The buildings at the north end of the western blockfront of Washington Avenue between Park Avenue and Flushing Avenue are outside of the National Register historic district, but have been included in the proposed New York City landmark district. This includes No. 50-52, a superb Romanesque Revival style industrial building with a rock-faced stone base, brick upper facade, tall round arches, and beautiful square blocks of terra cotta set in the spandrels of the arches.

The Van Glahn/Rockwood complex, along with 50-52 Washington Avenue should be nominated for designation as a historic district by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. These buildings might also be included in a larger Wallabout Industrial Historic District extending from Clinton Avenue to Grand Avenue between Park Avenue and Flushing Avenue.

Several businesses were responsible for the construction of buildings on the east side of Washington Avenue. Although these buildings are, for the most part, not well maintained, they work with the buildings on the west side of the street, and with buildings on Waverly Avenue and Hall Street, to create a significant late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century industrial/commercial streetscape.

Several buildings on the block were erected as storage buildings by **E. Le Grand Beers**'s wholesale grocery business. Beers commissioned his buildings from Brooklyn architect George Chappell and his firm of Chappell & Bosworth. Buildings erected for Beers include Nos. 43-45 (1903), 47-49 (1910), and No. 73 (1896). No. 61-69 was designed by Chappell & Bosworth in 1909 for the **Eastern Hygienic Ice Company**, which may have been associated with Beers's business. Information on other buildings on this blockfront, including the handsome six-story brick building at 77-79 Washington Avenue, is not available. The buildings on the east side of Washington Avenue might be included in a Wallabout Industrial Historic District.

#### *Hall Street between Park and Flushing Avenues*

The buildings that survive on the west side of Hall Street were erected by two wholesale grocery businesses. **E. Le Grand Beers**, who also erected buildings on the east side of Washington Avenue, commissioned the large, seven-story, brick (later stuccoed over), cold storage warehouse at 30-38 Hall Street from George Chappell in 1898. This building was extended to the north (Nos. 24-28) in 1918. **Charles Hutwelker** commissioned two cold storage buildings to the north, both designed by C. E. Huntley & Co. Hutwelker was a meat packer who went into business in Brooklyn in 1884. The Hall Street warehouses were initially occupied by the Charles Hutwelker Beef Export Company. No. 14-16 was designed in 1909 and No. 18-22 in 1919. These buildings could be included within a Wallabout Industrial Historic District.

The east side of Hall Street contains buildings that are part of the larger Mergenthaler Linotype complex and will be discussed under Ryerson Street.

#### *Ryerson Street between Park and Flushing Avenues*



William Jürgens Grocery Warehouse, Flushing Avenue and Ryerson Street

Ryerson Street is dominated by buildings erected for the Mergenthaler Linotype Company, one of Brooklyn's largest industrial enterprises in the twentieth century. The Mergenthaler company erected major buildings on the two full blocks fronting on Hall Street, Ryerson Street, and Grand Avenue between Park Avenue and Flushing Avenue. Mergenthaler was not, however, the first industrial concern on these blocks. One major building survives from the period before the linotype company began purchasing land in this area. Located on the southwest corner of Ryerson Street and Flushing Avenue, just opposite the entrance to the Wallabout Market, is the five-story brick grocery warehouse designed by Theobald Engelhardt in 1890 for **William B. A. Jürgens**. The Jürgens firm was

established in 1867 and by the early twentieth century was Brooklyn's largest wholesale grocery establishment, the "leader," according to *King's Views of Brooklyn*, "in the enormous trade, supplying retailers in Brooklyn, the suburbs, and the scores of towns throughout Long Island" (King, 32). Theobald Engelhardt was a German immigrant who worked extensively for Brooklyn's large German community, designing houses, churches, factories, and cultural facilities for the

community. For Jürgens, Engelhardt designed a five-story brick building of mill construction. On the ground-floor, the facade has wide, segmental-arch openings with toothed-brick trim. The facades have been painted. The grocery warehouse was later acquired by the Mergenthaler Linotype Company and has been included in the proposed Mergenthaler Linotype Company Historic District.

The blocks of Hall Street, Ryerson Street, and Grand Avenue are dominated by the massive seven- to nine-story factory buildings, most of reinforced-concrete construction, erected between 1907 and 1942 for the **Mergenthaler Linotype Company** one of the most important firms in the history of industry in Brooklyn. The company manufactured the machines that, prior to the invention of computerized printing, were used to print most newspapers and magazines and many books. The linotype machine, invented by Ottmar Mergenthaler in 1886, began the mechanization of printing, replacing the typesetting of individual letters with a machine that created bars containing multiple letters. At a linotype machine, a typist, sitting at a keyboard akin to that of a typewriter, formed matrices, small brass units with indented characters. These were assembled in justified lines and were then cast into solid bars of type known as slugs. The slugs were then combined to create a page of print.

Ottmar Mergenthaler was born in Germany in 1854 and, after an apprenticeship to a watchmaker, emigrated to the United States in 1872 where he entered the watchmaking business of a cousin in Washington, D.C. He began experimenting with printing machines in 1876, but it was not until 1886 that the first linotype machine was in use – at the *New York Tribune*. In that year Mergenthaler's machine also printed the world's first book created without handset type – *The Tribune Book of Open Air Sports* (Mengel, *Ottmar Mergenthaler*, 60). It was *Tribune* publisher Whitelaw Reid who gave Mergenthaler's machine the name "linotype," literally a line-of-type. With the success of this machine, Mergenthaler established the Mergenthaler Linotype Company in New York City. In 1890, the company moved its manufacturing to Brooklyn. Mergenthaler died in 1899, but the company continued to grow, erecting a series of large industrial buildings in the Wallabout area. In 1954, the centennial of Mergenthaler's birth, the Brooklyn company estimated that it had manufactured 70,000 machines since 1890. In 1913, Mergenthaler was the fifth largest industrial employer in Brooklyn, with 1,656 workers – 1,367 men and 196 women in the shop and 93 people in the office (*Industrial Directory*, 313). Office employment increased in 1920 when the corporate headquarters moved from Manhattan to the sixth and seventh floors of a new building erected at 15-45 Ryerson Street (Mergenthaler Co. Moves Offices). In 1942, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported that the factory employed 2,872 workers (Linotype Concern).

The Mergenthaler Linotype Company's first building in Brooklyn was located on the west side of Ryerson Street, in the middle of the blockfront between Park and Flushing Avenues (the building was replaced in 1927). The earliest extant buildings of the complex are located on the east side of Hall Street, including a five-story machine shop designed in 1905 by Clifton Hall. This is a brick building constructed of traditional mill construction. Beginning in 1907, the Mergenthaler company built a series of reinforced-concrete factories. Today, this is one of the largest and most intact groups of reinforced-concrete industrial buildings in New York City.

Concrete has a long history extending back to the ancient Romans, but it was only in the early twentieth century that reinforced concrete as a building material became popular, especially for

industrial buildings. The earliest experiments with reinforcing concrete with iron bars occurred in Europe in the 1840s and 1850s. In the United States, S. T. Fowler received a patent for a reinforced-concrete wall in 1860 and in the early 1870s William E. Ward erected a reinforced-concrete house in Rye Brook, Westchester County, New York. The material remained a novelty, however, until the late nineteenth century. In 1892, French engineer François Hennebique developed a method of pouring slabs, beams, and columns of reinforced concrete. This patented system was marketed in the United States and there is an exceptional example of a concrete building erected with the Hennebique system located a few blocks west of Wallabout – the Thomson Meter Company Building at 102-110 Bridge Street, designated a city landmark in 2004 (Wallace).



Mergenthaler Linotype Company, Park Avenue between Hall Street and Ryerson Street

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries major advances in reinforced-concrete technology occurred in the United States, led by Ernest L. Ransome. These advances led to the increasing popularity of the material in the United States. Ransome invented a twisted, square iron rod that created a strong bond between the metal and the concrete. In 1892, Ransome began construction of two buildings at Stanford University that employed reinforced concrete on the exterior and in 1897 erected a building in Bayonne, New Jersey with the floor slabs poured integrally with the buildings framework; the floor slabs were supported on solid concrete columns supported by stirrups. Finally, between 1900 and 1902, Ransome perfected a system for constructing buildings with concrete floors and columns with concrete walls that were designed as frames for large expanses of glass. In 1902, Ransome sold the patent rights for the twisted bar to two young engineers in his office, Henry C. Turner and DeForrest Dixon. Turner and Dixon established the Turner Construction Company which was responsible for the construction of many of the reinforced-concrete buildings in Brooklyn. However, the Ransome system of twisted bars

was not the only system of concrete construction employed by Brooklyn factories – other architects and engineers perfected their own systems. For example, engineer Julius Kahn invented a system that was used by his brother Albert Kahn (Ferry, 10-11).

The result of the advances made in the use of reinforced concrete in France and in America was that by the first years of the twentieth century, the material was seen as appropriate for factories and its use increased rapidly. Reinforced concrete offered factory owners several advantages over other materials, advantages that the various companies that produced the raw materials for reinforced concrete, especially the Portland cement companies, exploited in their marketing. As the Atlas Portland Cement Company noted in one of its publications "Reinforced concrete, through the reduction in price of first-class Portland cement and the greater perfection of the principles of design, has lately become a formidable competition to both steel and slow-burning construction, competition of steel. . .because of its lower cost, shorter time of construction, and freedom from vibration; a competition of slow-burning construction because of its greater fire protection, lower insurance

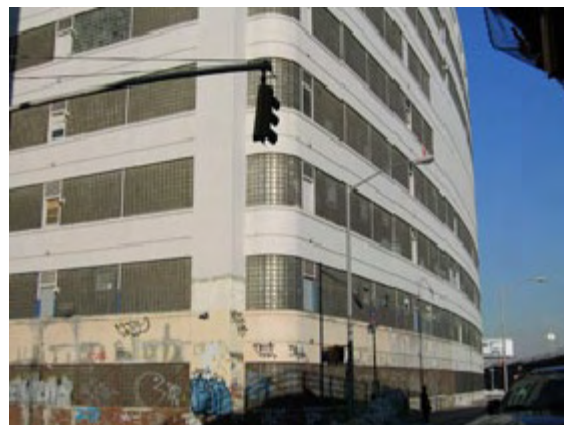
rates, durability, freedom from repairs and renewals, and even in many cases, its lower actual cost" (Atlas Portland Cement, 11). In addition, reinforced-concrete construction permitted large walls of glass, thus increasing the light inside a factory building, and it increased floor loads, permitting the efficient use of heavy machinery. Also, the buildings could easily be washed and they were vermin-proof (Atlas Portland Cement, 16-17).

The first reinforced-concrete buildings erected by the Mergenthaler Linotype Company were designed by Albert Kahn, perhaps the most significant architect of industrial buildings in America during the early years of the twentieth century. Although best known for his work in the Detroit area, including major automobile factories, Kahn also designed a few industrial buildings in Brooklyn and elsewhere in the United States. In 1907, early in his career (Kahn's first industrial building was designed in 1901), Kahn designed the eight-story building that still stands at the northwest corner of Ryerson Street and Park Avenue using the Kahn system of concrete construction. Kahn expanded the building to the west, along Park Avenue, in 1912. As W. Hawkins Ferry notes in his history of Kahn's work, "this building was entirely constructed of concrete with no brick wall panels. The wall surface, except at the corners, was reduced to a minimum, and steel sash with opening ventilators were introduced from floor to ceiling" (Ferry, 12, 43).

In 1916, the Mergenthaler Linotype Company expanded onto the block to the east. Between 1916 and 1927 a series of new buildings were erected on Ryerson Street, Hall Street, and Grand Avenue. These were all apparently designed by New York City engineer Herman Foughera. All are austere concrete structures with large steel windows with operable ventilators. Foughera typically employed brickwork in the window spandrels of his buildings. The final building erected in the complex was built in 1942, during World War II, by the Defense Plant Corporation, a government company that erected factories throughout the country for the manufacture of war materiel. The building was leased to Mergenthaler and the firm manufactured precision mechanical and electronic devices. This building was constructed of reinforced concrete with a convex brick facade facing Park Avenue. The windows are primarily glass block. Since the building was actually owned by the United States government, it was used as offices for the Veteran's Administration after World War II.



Mergenthaler Linotype Company, Ryerson Street looking north from Park Avenue



Mergenthaler Linotype Company, Defense Plant Corporation Building, Park Avenue between Ryerson Street and Grand Avenue

The building was designed by Lockwood Greene Engineers, Inc., a firm founded in Rhode Island in the 1870s by Amos D. Lockwood and later expanded by Stephen Greene. Lockwood Greene specialized in the design and construction of textile factories, first in New England and later in the south. The company took the name Lockwood Greene Engineers, Inc. in 1928. Besides designing the Mergenthaler factory in 1942, Lockwood Greene Engineers was also responsible for several important buildings at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, designed and built the former Daily News factory on Atlantic Avenue, designed a pair of buildings for the Rockwood Chocolate Company on Waverly Avenue, and was involved with the construction of buildings at Rockefeller Center (Lincoln).

The former Mergenthaler Linotype Company buildings retain their integrity to a remarkable extent. Although some windows have been altered, notably on Grand Avenue, much of the original steel sash was intact in early 2005. The entire complex should be designated as a New York City landmark as soon as possible in order to preserve the original features of this architecturally and historically significant complex. The complex could form a Mergenthaler Linotype Historic District or it could be part of a larger Wallabout Industrial Historic District extending from Clinton Avenue to Grand Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues.

*Grand Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues*

The west side of this block is part of the Mergenthaler Linotype complex and is discussed on Ryerson Street, above. The east side has a mix of low-scale buildings of no architectural or historical interest.

*Steuben Street between Park and Flushing Avenues*

The east and west blockfronts are lined with modest industrial and residential buildings of little interest.

*Emerson Place between Park and Flushing Avenues*

The Brooklyn-Queens Expressway curves to the northeast at Emerson Place, displacing almost all of the buildings once on this street. The only surviving building is located at the northeast corner of Emerson Place and Park Avenue. This brick office building, with its chamfered corner, was apparently erected by the Long Island Bottlers Union.

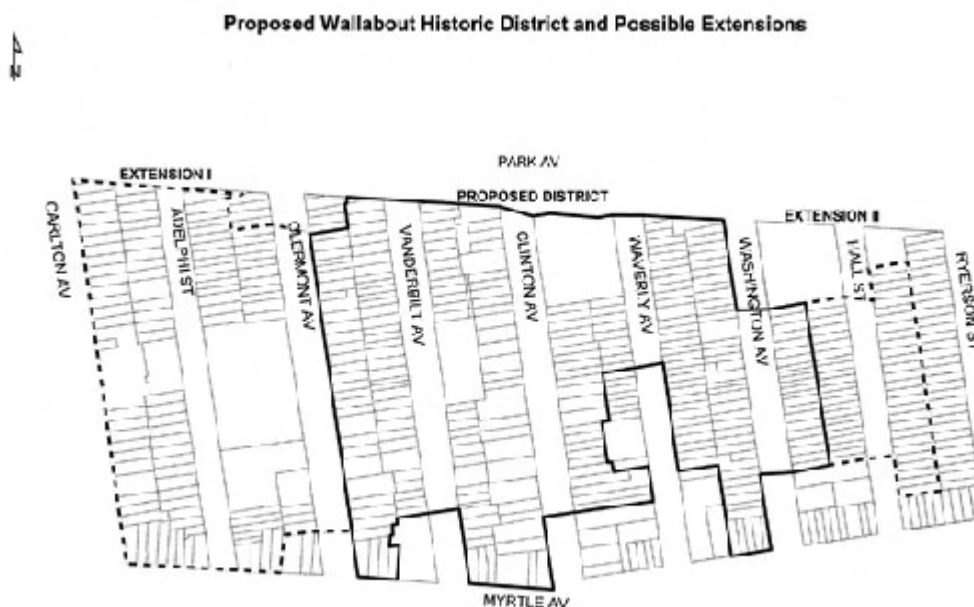
*Classon Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues*

A streetscape composed of a few modest garages and a large fenced open space.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of this survey process is the recommendation that the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission consider the designation of three historic districts in the area. The first of these districts is the proposed Wallabout Historic District, consisting primarily of residential buildings located between Myrtle and Park Avenues. The other two districts, the proposed Van Glahn/Rockwood Historic District and the proposed Mergenthaler Linotype Historic District, encompass the building complexes of specific industrial users. Alternatively, both of the industrial complexes could be included in a larger Wallabout Industrial Historic District, extending from the east blockfront of Clinton Avenue to the west blockfront of Grand Avenue. In addition, we are recommending the individual designation of the ten Italianate style rowhouses at 29-47 Vanderbilt Avenue, of the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church complex, and of the architecturally-distinguished Oxley, Giddings & Enos factory building located on Flushing Avenue between Carlton Avenue and Adelphi Street.

## Proposed Wallabout Historic District



The most significant recommendation of this survey is the designation of the Wallabout Historic District. The boundaries proposed for this district extend from the east side of Clermont Avenue on the west to the east side of Washington Avenue to the east, between Myrtle and Park Avenues. The Commission might also consider extending the boundary to the west to incorporate Adelphi Street, Carlton Avenue, and the west side of Clermont Avenue, and to the east to incorporate Hall Street. The proposed historic district contains the largest concentration of pre-Civil War wood frame houses in New York City, including many displaying Greek Revival and Gothic Revival motifs. Many still retain original or early porches and cornices. Most of these houses have been altered over the years since they were erected. Many had their sloping roofs replaced in the nineteenth century. The peak roofs and dormers were replaced by full stories, often with Italianate or Neo-Grec cornices. The majority have been resided over the years, often with synthetic materials. However, these houses could be restored relatively easily. This mixed-income neighborhood would be a perfect place for projects involving the Commission's Facade Improvement Program and the New York Landmarks Conservancy's program assisting the owners of homes in restoring facades (several wood houses have been successfully restored in the nearby Fort Greene Historic District). The district also contains many significant brick or stone rowhouses, including notable Italianate and Neo-Grec buildings. Among these are unusual brick houses with porches and with gable ends facing the street, and what appear to be the earliest houses erected by the prominent Pratt Family as a speculative investment. There are also a few later tenements and apartment houses in the proposed area, some of great architectural interest, and a historically significant industrial complex.

A historic district in this area has been proposed twice before, in the 1970s, once by the Fort Greene

Landmark Committee and once by the Landmark Commission's staff as part of a Brooklyn survey. The designation of this area would, indeed, take the Landmark Commission into new territory since so many of the houses have been altered. However, this must be weighed against the rarity of the resources. The area retains an extraordinary concentration of early wooden houses, complemented with early brick and stone rowhouses. Most of these buildings were erected for working-class and middle-class households. The designation of this area would complement the nearby Fort Greene and Clinton Hill Historic Districts, with the majority of their houses erected for households that were considerably more affluent.



77 Clermont Avenue



Vanderbilt Avenue, east side, view looking northeast

## 29-47 Vanderbilt Avenue



43 Vanderbilt Avenue



43 Vanderbilt Avenue doorway lintel

These ten Italianate style brick rowhouses were probably erected in the 1850s (further research will determine the exact date of construction). While there are many brick rowhouses in Brooklyn from this period and in this style, this row is extraordinary for its ornament. The buildings retain their stoops, cornices, and most of their cast-iron railings, but what is special are the cast-iron window lintels and the spectacular doorway lintels. These doorway lintels, with their rococo style pierced central flourish appear to be unique in New York City. As with the houses in the proposed Wallabout Historic District, these houses would benefit from the facade programs of the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Landmarks Conservancy.

### **Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church Complex**

Clermont Avenue and Adelphi Street between Flushing and Park Avenues



Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church

As discussed above, Sacred Heart is a complete nineteenth-century Catholic church complex, consisting of the church and subsidiary buildings – rectory, convent, and school. The complex was designed and built in several campaigns by Thomas Houghton, a prolific designer of Catholic churches in Brooklyn. Not only is this complex architecturally significant, but it reflects that character of the large Irish-immigrant community that settled in Wallabout in the nineteenth century.

## **Oxley, Giddings & Enos**

Flushing Avenue between Carlton Avenue and Adelphi Street

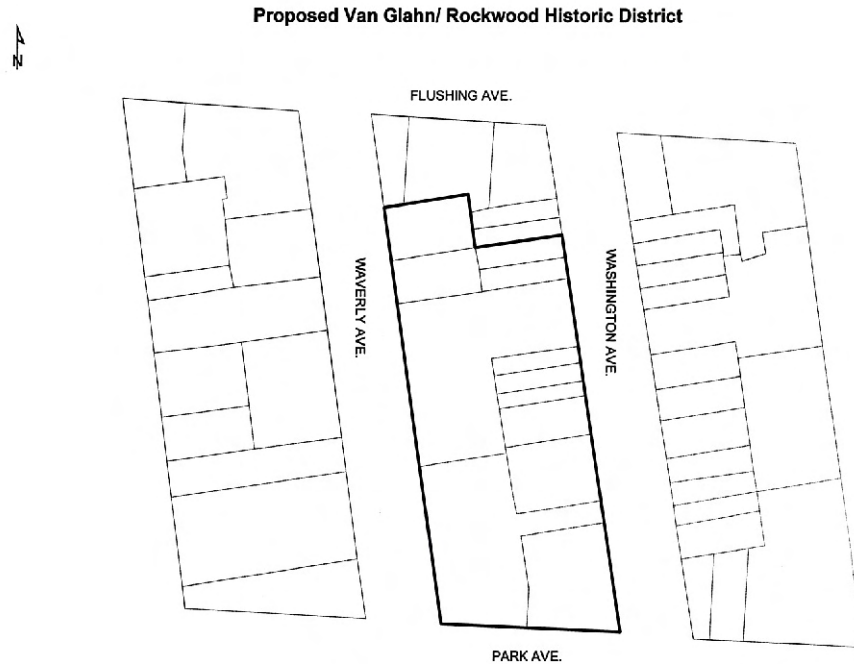


Oxley, Giddings & Enos Factory, first-story corner on Flushing Avenue

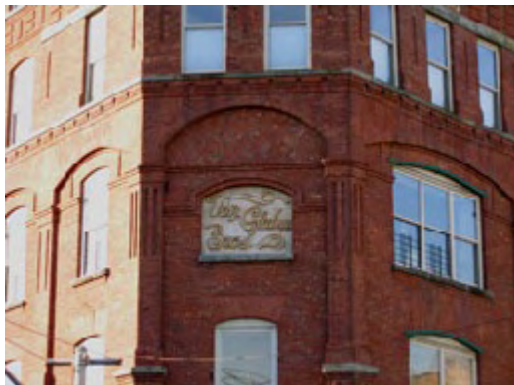
This factory was designed in 1886 for a gas-fixture manufacturer and was designed by William Field & Son, a firm responsible for a number of other important buildings in Brooklyn and in Manhattan. The factory is most significant architecturally. Unlike most factories erected of slow-burning mill construction (i.e. brick walls with wood posts and beams) which have brick walls with large unornamented window openings, Field designed the Oxley factory with fashionable Victorian Gothic motifs, evident at the corner of Flushing Avenue and Carlton Avenue, and with exceptionally fine brickwork.

## Van Glahn/Rockwood Historic District

Waverly Avenue and Washington Avenues at Park Avenue



The factory complex erected by the Van Glahn Brothers grocery business and then purchased and expanded by the Rockwood Chocolate Company, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The complex is historically significant, as one of the largest chocolate manufacturers in the United States, and architecturally significant as the work of several important Brooklyn architects, notably Parfitt Brothers and John G. Glover. The boundaries of the proposed district follow those in the National Register district with the addition of 50-52 Washington Avenue. The complex could be designated as a historic district or could be part of a larger Wallabout Industrial Historic District.



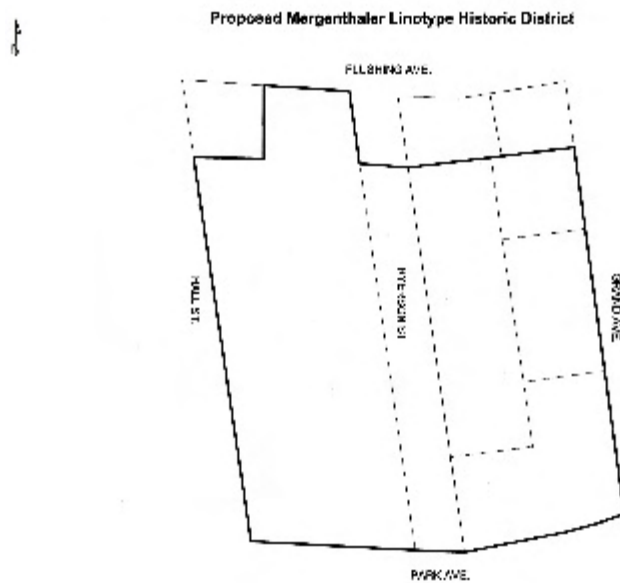
Van Glahn Brothers, corner detail on  
Washington Avenue and Park Avenue



Rockwood Chocolate Company, detail on Waverly  
Avenue

## Mergenthaler Linotype Historic District

Ryerson Street, Hall Street, and Grand Avenue between Park and Flushing Avenues



The massive reinforced-concrete factory buildings that flank both sides of Hall Street and extend onto Ryerson Street and Grand Avenue between Park Avenue and Flushing Avenue form an amazing surviving industrial complex. These buildings were erected for the Mergenthaler Linotype Company, one of the largest industrial employers in Brooklyn and the firm responsible for manufacturing most of the equipment on which newspaper type and type for other publications was created. The earliest buildings erected by Mergenthaler were built in the first years of the twentieth century to designs by Detroit architect Albert Kahn, the leading designer of industrial buildings in America. Construction continued almost continuously on the complex through the 1940s. The district also includes one earlier building, the former William Jürgens grocery warehouse, located on the southwest corner of Flushing Avenue and Ryerson Street, later purchased by the Mergenthaler company. These buildings create one of the most sublime industrial streetscapes in New York City. Of special note is the fact that most of these buildings retain all or most of their original steel window frames. Designation of this complex would ensure that the windows are retained and that any changes due to continued industrial use or conversion to a new use would be undertaken in a sensitive manner. The complex could be designated as a historic district or could be part of a larger Wallabout Industrial Historic District.

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