

**Jamaica Savings Bank**, 146-21 Jamaica Avenue (aka 146-19 to 146-21 Jamaica Avenue, 90-32 to 90-44 Sutphin Boulevard), Queens  
Built 1939; Morrell Smith, architect

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9676, Lot 37

On February 9, 2010, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Jamaica Savings Bank and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Historic Districts Council, Queens Preservation Council, and Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance. The Commission also received letters in support of designation from Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, State Senator Shirley L. Huntley, and the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation. Two representatives of the owner spoke in opposition to designation.

### Summary

The Jamaica Savings Bank was constructed in 1939 for the oldest and most prestigious banking institution in Jamaica, Queens. Designed by the noted architect Morrell Smith, the building is an excellent example of the Moderne style, with simple but well-designed details and dignified proportions. Incorporated in 1866, Jamaica Savings Bank was founded by a consortium of local citizens. The growth of the Jamaica Savings Bank paralleled the growth of the borough of Queens. The bank prospered, and established several branches to better serve customers. By 1939, the Jamaica Savings Bank had opened their main office in downtown Jamaica and another branch in Queens Village. This lot was purchased in 1934 in anticipation of the expansion of downtown Jamaica as a result of the erection of the general court house on Sutphin Boulevard, and the extension of the Eighth Avenue Subway line.



Architect Morrell Smith, celebrated for his designs of commercial bank buildings, designed this branch of the Jamaica Savings Bank in 1939. Set on a trapezoidal lot, the monumental one-story building faces the intersection with an angled façade and corner entrance. It is clad in Indiana limestone with a polished granite base. Tall rectangular windows create a vertical rhythm across the façades and a stylized Greek entablature provides a crown to the building. The slightly recessed windows have spandrel panels at the top ornamented with stars and geometric designs in low relief. An ornamental bronze doorway surmounted by an over-scaled eagle marks the entrance to the bank. The Moderne style bank displays an elegant handling of materials with abstracted classically-inspired ornament. In 1939, the Chamber of Commerce of the Borough of Queens awarded the bank first prize in an annual architectural award for a commercial building showing excellence in design and construction.

Smith utilized the most modern building design and construction methods of his time for the building, from the state-of-the-art air-conditioning system designed specifically for the structure, to the introduction of new sound absorption materials. The Jamaica Savings Bank still functions as a branch bank, and serves as a reminder of the growth and expansion of Jamaica during the twentieth century.

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Development of Jamaica<sup>1</sup>

Jamaica, one of the oldest settlements within the boundaries of New York City, developed into the leading commercial and entertainment center of Queens County, and one of the most densely populated areas in the borough. The southern part of the area was inhabited by a Native American tribe called the Jameco, when the first Europeans arrived there in 1655. In 1656, Robert Jackson applied to Governor Stuyvesant for a patent and “purchased” ten acres of land from the native tribe,<sup>2</sup> and called the settlement Rusdorp.

Following the transfer of power from the Dutch to the English in 1664, Rusdorp was renamed Jamaica, after the original Native American inhabitants of the region. Queens County (incorporating present-day Queens and Nassau Counties) was chartered in 1683. The English established Jamaica as the governmental center of Queens County, with a court, county clerk’s office, and parish church (Grace Episcopal Church; the present structure is a designated New York City Landmark). Outside the town center, Jamaica was largely an area of farm fields and grazing land for cattle.

A 1698 census of Queens County showed a total population of 3,366 whites and 199 blacks.<sup>3</sup> Although early records indicate the existence of slaves in Jamaica, throughout its history Jamaica also had a free black population. One of its most well-known African-American residents was Wilson Rantus who was born in Jamaica in 1807. He owned his own farm and invested in other residential properties in the town. Well-educated, he started a school for black children and became involved in the effort, along with other African-Americans such as Samuel V. Berry of Jamaica and Henry Amberman of Flushing, to achieve the right to vote for African-American citizens.<sup>4</sup>

New York State incorporated Jamaica as a village in 1814. Jamaica’s central location in Queens County and the extensive transportation network that developed in the town during the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the transformation of the community into the major commercial center for Queens County and much of eastern Long Island. It was the arrival of the railroads that began this transformation.<sup>5</sup> The roads and rail lines connecting Jamaica with other sections of Queens County, with Brooklyn to the west, eastern Long Island, and ferries to New York City had a tremendous impact. Jamaica’s farmland was soon being subdivided into streets and building lots, and new homes were erected.

By the turn of the century, Jamaica’s importance as a commercial area became evident in the impressive buildings beginning to appear on Jamaica Avenue, most notably the Beau-Arts Jamaica Savings Bank, 161-02 Jamaica Avenue (Hough & Deuell, 1897-98, a designated New York City Landmark). After Jamaica was incorporated into the borough of Queens and became a part of New York City on January 1, 1898, additional transportation improvements brought increasing numbers of people.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the population of Jamaica quadrupled between 1900 and 1920.

It was during the 1920s, when the major mass transit links were in place, and during a period when private automobile ownership was growing at an extraordinary rate, that Jamaica experienced its major expansion as a commercial and entertainment center. By 1925, Jamaica Avenue between 160<sup>th</sup> Street and 168<sup>th</sup> Street had the highest assessed valuation in Queens County.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s, many small-scale commercial buildings were erected in Jamaica, as well as several major office and commercial structures including the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, 89-31 161st Street (George W. Conable, 1928-29); the Suffolk Title Guarantee Company Building, 90-04 161st Street (Dennison & Hirons, 1929, a designated New York City Landmark); and the J. Kurtz & Sons Store, 162-65 Jamaica Avenue (Allmendinger & Schlendorf, 1931, a designated New York City Landmark). This branch of Jamaica Savings Bank was built during this time. In addition, Jamaica developed into a significant entertainment center. By the mid-1930s, there were at least eight movie theaters on or just off Jamaica Avenue, and there were more than 60 restaurants, bars and clubs, ranging from small ethnic taverns to elegant restaurants.

Growth continued throughout the 20th century as more people purchased automobiles and new areas not reached by mass transit became accessible. An article in the *Long Island Daily Press* in 1956 called Jamaica “the fastest growing community in America.”<sup>8</sup>

## History of the Jamaica Savings Bank<sup>9</sup>

The Jamaica Savings Bank, the oldest and most prestigious banking institution in Jamaica, was incorporated on April 20, 1866, in the midst of the “wildcat” banking period following the Civil War. The bank was established in the basement of the County Clerk’s Office and opened on July 14, 1866, with 15 customers depositing a total of \$2,675.00. The County Clerk’s Office (later the Register’s Office) was located in a building that previously stood on the site of the present Register/Jamaica Arts Center building (a designated New York City Landmark).

The bank was founded by a group of distinguished local business leaders and prominent citizens. Among the 19 charter trustees was John Alsop King (1788-1867), who served as a U.S. Congressman and as Governor of New York State in 1857-58.<sup>10</sup> He was the eldest son of Rufus King, a Federalist statesman, abolitionist, minister to Great Britain, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The King Mansion (1733-55; additions, 1806, 1810, c.1830s, a designated New York City Landmark) still stands at 150th Street and Jamaica Avenue. John A. King was admitted to the bar shortly before being commissioned as a lieutenant of cavalry in the War of 1812. King launched his political career in 1819-21 when he sat in the State Assembly, and later in the State Senate (1823-25, 1832, 1838, and 1840). He was sent to the U.S. Congress as a Whig representative, served as a delegate to several Whig national conventions, and in 1856, was a delegate to the first Republican national convention. In the following year he began his term as Governor of New York State. King was stricken with paralysis and died in 1867, the year after the founding of the Jamaica Savings Bank.

Following distinguished service as a colonel in the Civil War, Aaron DeGrauw became the first president of the Jamaica Savings Bank, a post he maintained for 33 years until 1899.<sup>11</sup> Described as “an energetic capitalist destined to be the most prominent banker in Jamaica,” DeGrauw was an entrepreneur in the transportation field, operating several turnpikes as well as the East New York & Jamaica Railroad Company.<sup>12</sup> A leader in civic affairs, DeGrauw also served as president of Jamaica village and on the commission in charge of the construction of the town hall, built in 1870, at the corner of Fulton Street and Flushing Avenue.

By 1874 the business of the Jamaica Savings Bank had grown significantly, with 630 accounts on the books and \$177,465.00 in deposits. In that year the bank purchased for \$12,000 a two-and-one-half story frame building which belonged to the County Clerk’s Office and stood on the site of the present bank building at 161-02 Jamaica Avenue. As the bank grew, more spacious quarters were needed; it is also likely that consideration was given to enhancing the image and status of the institution with a new, handsomely-designed bank building which would foster confidence in the bank’s depositors and exhibit its prosperity. The new 1897-98 bank building, (a designated New York City Landmark) a rare example of the Beaux-Arts style in Queens, conveyed the kind of monumentality that is often associated with private social clubs and civic institutions.

The growth in the business of the Jamaica Savings Bank following World War I paralleled that of Jamaica’s downtown, which had become the foremost commercial center of Queens. In 1924, when Jamaica Savings Bank first enlarged its headquarters building, there were seven banks in Jamaica, and the local press referred to Jamaica Avenue as “Financial Row.”<sup>13</sup> In 1923 the Jamaica Savings Bank commissioned local architect William H. Spaulding to design a rear addition to the headquarters building.<sup>14</sup> In 1932 architect Morrell Smith was hired to further enlarge the building, necessitating the demolition of the old frame structure that still stood at the rear of the site.<sup>15</sup>

Jamaica continued to prosper during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, as did the Jamaica Savings Bank, resulting in the bank purchasing a lot with an existing building for a new branch bank in 1934. The erection of the general court house on Sutphin Boulevard, and the extension of the Eighth Avenue Subway line, influenced the bank’s decision to build a new branch on the northwest corner of Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard.<sup>16</sup> In 1938 Jamaica Savings Bank President George S. Downing announced plans for the demolition of the existing building at Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard, as “the building ceased to be adequate in serving its depositors, and a new more modernistic building became necessary.”<sup>17</sup> The officers and trustees touted the new bank as “a distinct contribution to the civic

betterment of community.”<sup>18</sup> When the Moderne style bank at 146-21 Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard opened, Jamaica Savings Bank was the 47<sup>th</sup> largest savings institution in the United States. During the mid-twentieth century the Jamaica Savings Bank expanded several times, merging with the Queensboro Savings Bank in 1934, the Savings Bank of Central Queens in 1937, and the Rockaway Savings Bank in 1957.

### Bank Design<sup>19</sup>

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, bank design in this country incorporated both the construction of individual buildings and the conversion of private homes into bank offices, a popular practice after the Civil War. In the wake of an unsettled financial situation during the 1870s, bank officials saw the advantage of creating substantial freestanding edifices that would assert a presence in the community, and signal financial stability. This desire for a show of soundness and durability was particularly important to savings banks, which tended to be less centrally located and needed to appeal to individual investors.

In the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, buildings with Classical elements such as columns, arches, and cornices communicated a sense of continuity and tradition during periods of pre-and post-World War economic instability. Through most of the 1920s, Classical designs with Greek and Roman precedents dominated the design of banks, whether built as freestanding institutions or as a base for a larger office structures. The use of monumental Classical designs frequently resulted in banks being the most significant buildings in a community. Not surprisingly, the design and construction of banks were frequent topics in the architectural press.<sup>20</sup> By the late 1920s, changes in banking practices and the need of the clientele “contributed to the gradual retreat from the austere monumentality of Roman and [Italian] Renaissance classicism to more vernacular idioms.”<sup>21</sup>

The architectural firm of York & Sawyer, one of the most prolific bank designers of this period, helped break the traditional Classical style of banks in New York by using a variety of precedents such as the French Renaissance style in the 1924 extension to the Franklin Savings Bank on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Eighth Avenue (demolished), a Florentine Renaissance style palazzo for the Federal Reserve Bank at Liberty and Nassau Streets and Maiden Lane (1919-24, a designated New York City Landmark), and Byzantine and Romanesque styles for the Bowery Savings Bank on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street (1921-23 and 1931-33, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark). Once York & Sawyer used different stylistic treatments for bank buildings, other architects began to employ a variety of sources, including among others, Georgian and American Colonial. In addition the banking industry, as was true in other fields, needed to address the greater influence of women in the public realm and the move towards less formality in business. In the late 1920s, bank designers, and other architects were influenced by the modern designs initially displayed in Paris at the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs. Architectural firms such as Dennison & Hiron, Starrett & Van Vleck and Morrell Smith became known for their simplified Art Deco or Moderne style bank designs and these styles were often used for branch banks in the outer boroughs.

### Moderne Style<sup>22</sup>

The Moderne style can be understood as a variant of the Art Deco style of architecture, which reached the height of its popularity in this country at the end of the 1920s and into the early years of the 1930s. Art Deco, called an “avant-garde traditionalist”<sup>23</sup> approach to creating a contemporary idiom for buildings of the period, was based on accepted, standard forms and construction techniques, which were given a modern cast through the use of a characteristic ornament, and a variety of often luxurious materials, some new and some simply used in new ways. Design and ornamental ideas used in Art Deco were shaped by numerous influences including: the well-publicized designs of the Vienna Secessionists, the Wiener Werkstätte, German Expressionists, as well as American architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan, contemporary theatre set designs, and Mayan and other Native American forms. The name derives from the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris where it was popularized. After 1925 this style began to be seen on all types of buildings in America, from stores to schools, railroad stations, municipal buildings, theatres, and especially skyscrapers. As the Depression set

in and the rich materials and fine craftsmanship necessary for Art Deco style buildings were no longer possible to obtain, buildings became more stripped down, more easily produced with modern technology and with less expense. Unlike Art Deco, Moderne is simple, unadorned, and horizontal. The Moderne style was a later more simplified version of this earlier type, with straight, simple lines, minimal applied ornament, and modern mass-produced materials. In the Moderne style stripped-down classical architectural elements such as pilasters, lintels, and cornices were fitted into this modern framework. Jamaica Savings Bank at 146-21 Jamaica Avenue is a fine example of this simplified style, with its straightforward details and dignified proportions.

### Morrell Smith

Morrell Smith (1876-1947),<sup>24</sup> was born in Springfield, Queens, New York. He was fluid in a wide variety of architectural styles, and was particularly active in the borough of Queens. He opened his first office in Far Rockaway, Queens in 1896.<sup>25</sup> Starting in 1920, Smith developed an extensive relationship with the Bank of Manhattan, now Chase Manhattan Bank, by becoming the architect for their branch offices. Among these were: the Jamaica branch (1921) at 162<sup>nd</sup> Street and Jamaica Avenue; the Jackson Heights branch (1922) at 82<sup>nd</sup> Street and Roosevelt Avenue; the Bronx Executive offices and bank branch (1930) at 369 E. 149<sup>th</sup> Street at Third Avenue.<sup>26</sup> He received several awards for his designs of bank branch offices, among these were: the Queens Plaza building (1927) an 11-story office building in Long Island City at 27-29 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue, the tallest building in Queens when completed,<sup>27</sup> and a Bank of Manhattan Trust Company Far Rockaway branch (1930) at Central Avenue.<sup>28</sup>

In 1929 Smith established himself as an architect in Manhattan, with offices at 101 Park Avenue and later with offices at 475 Fifth Avenue until 1940. Also in 1929, Smith was selected by Mayor Walker as one of the technical experts to the advisory committee, to aide in drafting a new building code. Among Morrell Smith's finest known works was a neo-Tudor office building designed for the Queensboro Corporation (1929) on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street and 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Jackson Heights Historic District. This building was designed as a part of a group of commercial structures that were an early planning attempt to integrate the commercial area of a neighborhood with its surrounding residential community. In early 1938 Smith was commissioned to design the new bank branch on Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard, which received an award for design innovation.<sup>29</sup>

### Design and Construction

In anticipation of the rapid growth of borough of Queens and particularly the neighborhood of Jamaica, land on Jamaica and Sutphin Boulevard was purchased in 1934 for a new branch office for the Jamaica Savings Bank.<sup>30</sup> The bank's executives commissioned Morrell Smith to design the new branch. His earlier designs for the addition to Jamaica Savings Bank's headquarters, and other successful branch banks, made him an obvious choice. Construction of the building attracted attention from the local and national press, due in part to its innovative design and modern amenities. In 1939, the Chamber of Commerce of the Borough of Queens awarded the bank "First Prize for Excellence of Design and Construction." The bank was one of seven recipients of an annual architectural award for commercial buildings showing excellence in design and construction.

Moderne in style, with uncomplicated details and dignified proportions, the building at Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard utilized the most modern building design and construction methods of its time, from the state-of-the-art air conditioning system designed specifically for this building, which controlled temperature and humidity and removed dust and odors, to the introduction of new sound absorption materials.<sup>31</sup> All of these elements contributed to the unique design of this impressive bank building.

### Subsequent History

Jamaica Savings Bank celebrated its 105th anniversary in 1971, with one billion dollars in assets.<sup>32</sup> In 1983, Jamaica Savings Bank converted to Federal Jamaica Savings bank. In 1990, the bank was converted from a privately owned mutual savings bank to a stock savings bank in which shares were

sold to the general public.<sup>33</sup> North Fork Bancorp acquired the eleven branches of the Jamaica Savings Bank in 1999.

### Description

Jamaica Savings Bank is a monumental one-story building that faces the intersection of Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard, with an angled façade and corner entrance. It is clad in Indiana limestone with a high base of polished granite. The building has a longer frontage along Sutphin Boulevard. The canted corner accentuates a vertical composition that begins with the entrance, and is followed by a multi-light window, whose lintel features an American eagle perched on the keystone that is flanked by Greek key carved in low-relief, and surmounted by the original flagpole. A non-historic concrete, combined ramp and step with non-historic metal railing, leads to the angled entrance. The entrance features a granite pediment that rests on fluted pilaster enframements, the pediment features carved scallop work and two raised, five-point stars at either side. Flanking, historic, ornamental cast-bronze paneled reveals, leads to a non-historic double-leaf metal-and-glass-door, with an historic bronze multi-light transom. The Jamaica Avenue facade contains two angled bays; each bay has a large, slightly recessed, multi-light window with a lintel that features, dancette molding and three five-point stars carved in low relief. This design feature is repeated on each window of the building. The first bay contains a small non-historic sign just above the granite base to the right of the entrance. A large removable non-historic sign runs the width of both angled bays, and rests above the windows. The Sutphin Boulevard facade contains seven bays. The first bay on the Sutphin Boulevard facade is slightly recessed and has been altered to lengthen the multi-light window. The facade also contains a small non-historic sign just above the granite base to the left of the entrance. The next five bays protrude slightly, each has a large multi-light window with the same ornamental design features of the windows on the Jamaica Avenue facade. The windows are crowned by a stone frieze engraved with the statement: FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THRIFT. To the right of the frieze is a large removable non-historic sign that rests above the windows. The last bay is slightly recessed, it contains a non-historic metal door, next, a small multi-light window, followed by a metal louvered vent. Multiple low-relief bands and a stylized Greek fret work form an entablature and provide a crown to the entire building that is surmounted at angled corner facade, by the historic flagpole that rests on a projecting key-block base at the roof level.

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### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> The information in this section comes from numerous sources, including: Benjamin F. Thompson, *History of Long Island* (New York: E. French, 1839); Kenneth Jackson, Ed., "Jamaica," *The Encyclopedia of New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 610-611; LPC, *Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building Designation Report* (LP-2088) (New York: City of New York, 2001), prepared by Virginia Kurshan; LPC, *(Former) Jamaica Savings Bank Designation Report* (LP-2109) (New York: City of New York, 2008), prepared by Elisa Urbanelli, Marjorie Pearson, and Michael D. Caratzas; and Vincent F. Seyfried, *Jamaica Trolleys* (Long Island Trolley Histories, vol. 4, 1953), 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> The Native American "system of land tenure was that of occupancy for the needs of a group," and those sales that Europeans deemed outright transfers of property were, to Native Americans, closer to leases or joint tenancy

contracts in which they still had rights to the property. Reginald Pelham Bolton, *New York City in Indian Possession*, 2nd ed. (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1920; reprint 1975), 7, 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Jeff Gottlieb, "History of Jamaica" (n. p.), in the clippings file of the Long Island Division, Queens Library.

<sup>4</sup> LPC, *Jamaica High School Designation Report* (LP-2316) (New York: City of New York, 2009), prepared by Virginia Kurshan.

<sup>5</sup> In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the King's Highway, which led from Brooklyn to Queens along the route of a Native America trail, had become a toll road, known as the Brooklyn, Jamaica & Flatbush Turnpike. In 1832, the Brooklyn and Jamaica Railroad Company was established. It purchased the turnpike and began construction of a rail line. Two years later, the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) was founded. It leased the Brooklyn and Jamaica's right of way, inaugurating service between Jamaica and a ferry at the foot of Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn in 1836; the line was extended eastward to Hicksville a year later. The opening of the initial LIRR line through Jamaica established the village as a transportation hub, but other developments increased Jamaica's importance. In 1850, Jamaica Avenue was converted into a plank road by the Jamaica & Brooklyn Plank Road Company, thus improving road transportation between the Fulton Ferry and Queens County. Horsecar lines began operation on the avenue in 1866 when the East New York & Jamaica Railroad Company inaugurated service; the horsecars were replaced by electric trolleys in the mid-1880s. In 1860, the LIRR began service from a ferry landing at Hunter's Point to Jamaica, and in 1869 a rival railroad company, the South Side Railroad, began service between Jamaica and Patchogue.

<sup>6</sup> These improvements included the widening and repaving of Jamaica Avenue (known as Fulton Street until about 1918) in 1898; the electrification of the LIRR in 1905-08; the opening of the Queensborough Bridge in 1909; the completion of the LIRR's tunnel beneath the East River in 1910 (the bridge and tunnel obviated the need for ferries, thus cutting community time to and from Long Island and Manhattan); and the completion of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company's elevated railroad on Jamaica Avenue in 1918.

<sup>7</sup> The importance of Jamaica's geographic location and the development of the area as a transportation and commercial hub were recognized in the *WPA Guide to New York City*: "Jamaica, the community around Jamaica Avenue and Parsons Boulevard, is the geographic center of Queens. Most of the important Brooklyn and Queens highways that lead to Nassau County and eastern Long Island pass through Jamaica. It is the terminus of the BMT and Independent subways and the principal transfer station of the Long Island Railroad. Along the main thoroughfare, Jamaica Avenue there has evolved a comprehensive suburban shopping center." *WPA Guide to New York City* (New York: Random House, 1939; reprinted New York: Pantheon, 1982), 583.

<sup>8</sup> William A. Raidy, "Jamaica Marks 300th Birthday," *Long Island Daily Press*, March 11, 1956.

<sup>9</sup> Information in this section is partially based on LPC, (*Former*) *Jamaica Savings Bank Designation Report*; most of the information is compiled from articles found in the Jamaica History Vertical File, Queens Borough Public Library: "Jamaica Landmark to Give Way to Expansion of Bank," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 18, 1932; "Savings Bank 69 Years Old," *Long Island Daily Press*, October 28, 1935; "Bank Marks 70th Year of its Existence," *Long Island Daily Press*, July 14, 1936; "Savings Bank Celebrates its 75th Year," *Long Island Daily Press*, July 14, 1941; and "Jamaica Savings Bank Marks 75th Milestone," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 14, 1941. See also the souvenir booklet *Jamaica Old and New* (New York: Jamaica Savings Bank, 1924).

<sup>10</sup> For information on King, see Dumas Malone, Ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960-61).

<sup>11</sup> For information on DeGrauw, see "Savings Bank Celebrates its 75th Year"; and Seyfried, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Seyfried, 3.

<sup>13</sup> "Jamaica National Bank Formally Opened," *Jamaica Jinjer* 4, no. 1 (August 1924), 5-7.

<sup>14</sup> The addition was 32 feet deep, which made the total depth of the building approximately 80 feet; the main-floor banking room was completely redesigned and two new vaults were constructed. Borough of Queens, Department of Buildings, ALT No. 1372-1923. The estimated cost of the project was given as \$55,000. Work was completed in 1924.

<sup>15</sup> Borough of Queens, Department of Buildings, ALT No. 7668-1931. The cost of this project, completed in 1932, was estimated at \$40,000. The brick-and-steel extension made the building's depth about 140 feet, and a small addition was also made in the alleyway at the east side of the building, toward the front of the site.

<sup>16</sup> According to a 1938 article, "Rapid Growth of Jamaica has Precipitated Action."

<sup>17</sup> "Jamaica Savings Bank to Build a New Home," *New York Times*, August 28, 1938; "Architects View of the Bank," *The Queens Review*, September 2, 1938; "Jamaica Savings Bank Will Have New Modernistic Building Soon," *Long Island Daily*, September 2, 1938, 8; "Jamaica Savings Bank Opens New Sutphin Blvd. Building," *Queensborough* (April 1939), 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Information in this section is adapted from: Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and John Massengale, *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 177-183; Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 171-187.

<sup>20</sup> In June, 1923 (vol. 38) and again in June, 1948 (vol. 48), the *Architectural Forum* ran a series of articles on different issues around the design of banks, by architects specifically involved in this endeavor, such as Phillip Sawyer of York & Sawyer, Frederic Hirons of Dennison & Hirons, and Alfred Hopkins of Hopkins & Dentz.

<sup>21</sup> Stern, *New York 1930*, 173.

<sup>22</sup> Information in this section is adapted from: LPC, *Barclay-Vesey Building Designation Report* (LP-1745) (New York: City of New York, 1991), prepared by David Breiner; LPC, *Long Distance Building of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company Designation Report* (LP-1747) (New York: City of New York, 1991), prepared by David Breiner; LPC, *Western Union Building Designation Report* (LP: 1749) (New York: City of New York, 1991), prepared by Betsy Bradley; Rosemarie Haag Bletter and Cervin Robinson, *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 88; David Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* (New York: Preservation Press, 1996); and LPC research files.

<sup>23</sup> Bletter and Robinson, 71.

<sup>24</sup> 1910 United States Census, Ward 5, Queens, New York, Roll T624-1068, Page 10B, Enumeration District 1250, Image 1058.

<sup>25</sup> "Building Notes," *The School Journal*, LV (July 1, 1897, to December 1, 1897), 733; in 1897 one of Morrell Smith's first commissions was an elementary school in Far Rockaway.

<sup>26</sup> "Bronx Bank Building," *New York Times*, February 9, 1930, RE2.

<sup>27</sup> "Queens Borough Buildings Get Architectural Awards," *New York Times*, January 29, 1928, 153.

<sup>28</sup> "Chamber Of Commerce Awards for Queens Buildings," *New York Times*, January 26, 1928, 154.

<sup>29</sup> "Symbol of Progress," *Queensborough Chamber of Commerce* (December 1939), 4, 29.

<sup>30</sup> Information in this section was compiled from New York City, Borough of Queens, Department of Buildings Plans, Permits, and Dockets (Block 9676, Lot 37).

<sup>31</sup> "Jamaica Savings Bank Opens New Sutphin Boulevard Building," *Queensborough Chamber of Commerce* (April 1939), 4.

<sup>32</sup> "Jamaica Savings Bank," *Long Island Press*, May 21, 1971, 47.

<sup>33</sup> "Jamaica Savings Bank: Concern Will Convert Itself to Stockholder Ownership," *Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 1990.



## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Jamaica Savings Bank has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Jamaica Savings Bank was constructed in 1939 for the oldest and most prestigious banking institution in Jamaica; that it was designed by the noted architect Morrell Smith; that the building is an excellent example of the Moderne style with simple but well-designed details and dignified proportions; that the Jamaica Savings Bank was incorporated in 1866 and was founded by a consortium of local citizens; that the growth of the Jamaica Savings Bank paralleled the growth of the Borough of Queens; that as the bank steadily prospered, business necessitated the establishment of several branches to better serve their customers; that by 1939, the Jamaica Savings Bank was thoroughly invested in the community of Jamaica, New York, with one large main office in downtown Jamaica and another branch in Queens Village; that this lot was purchased in 1934 in anticipation of the expansion of downtown Jamaica; that the erection of the general court house on Sutphin Boulevard, and the extension of the Eighth Avenue Subway line, all influenced the bank's decision to build a new branch on the northwest corner of Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard; that Morrell Smith, celebrated for his designs of commercial bank buildings, designed this branch of the Jamaica Savings Bank in 1939; that set on a trapezoidal lot, the monumental one-story building faces the intersection with an angled façade and corner entrance; that it is clad in Indiana limestone with a polished granite base; that tall rectangular windows create a vertical rhythm across the façades and a stylized Greek entablature provides a crown to the building; that the slightly recessed windows have spandrel panels at the top ornamented with stars and geometric designs in low relief; that the Moderne style bank displays an elegant handling of materials, abstracted classically-inspired ornament; that an ornamental bronze doorway surmounted by an over-scaled eagle marks the entrance to the bank; that in 1939, the Chamber of Commerce of the Borough of Queens awarded the bank first prize in an annual architectural award for a commercial building showing excellence in design and construction; that Smith utilized the most modern building design and construction methods of its time for the building, from the state-of-the-art air conditioning system designed specifically for the structure to the introduction of new sound absorption materials; that the Jamaica Savings Bank, which still functions as a branch bank, remains an impressive presence on Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard that recalls the growth and expansion of Jamaica during the twentieth century.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City Of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Jamaica Savings Bank, 146-21 Jamaica Avenue (aka 146-19 to 146-21 Jamaica Avenue, 90-32 to 90-44 Sutphin Boulevard), Queens, and designates Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9676, Lot 37 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Pablo Vengoechea, Vice Chair

Diana Chapin, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



Jamaica Savings Bank  
146-21 Jamaica Avenue (aka 146-19 to 146-21 Jamaica Avenue, 90-32 to 90-44 Sutphin Boulevard),  
Queens

Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard facades

*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*



Jamaica Savings Bank  
Jamaica Avenue facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*



Jamaica Savings Bank  
Sutphin Boulevard facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*

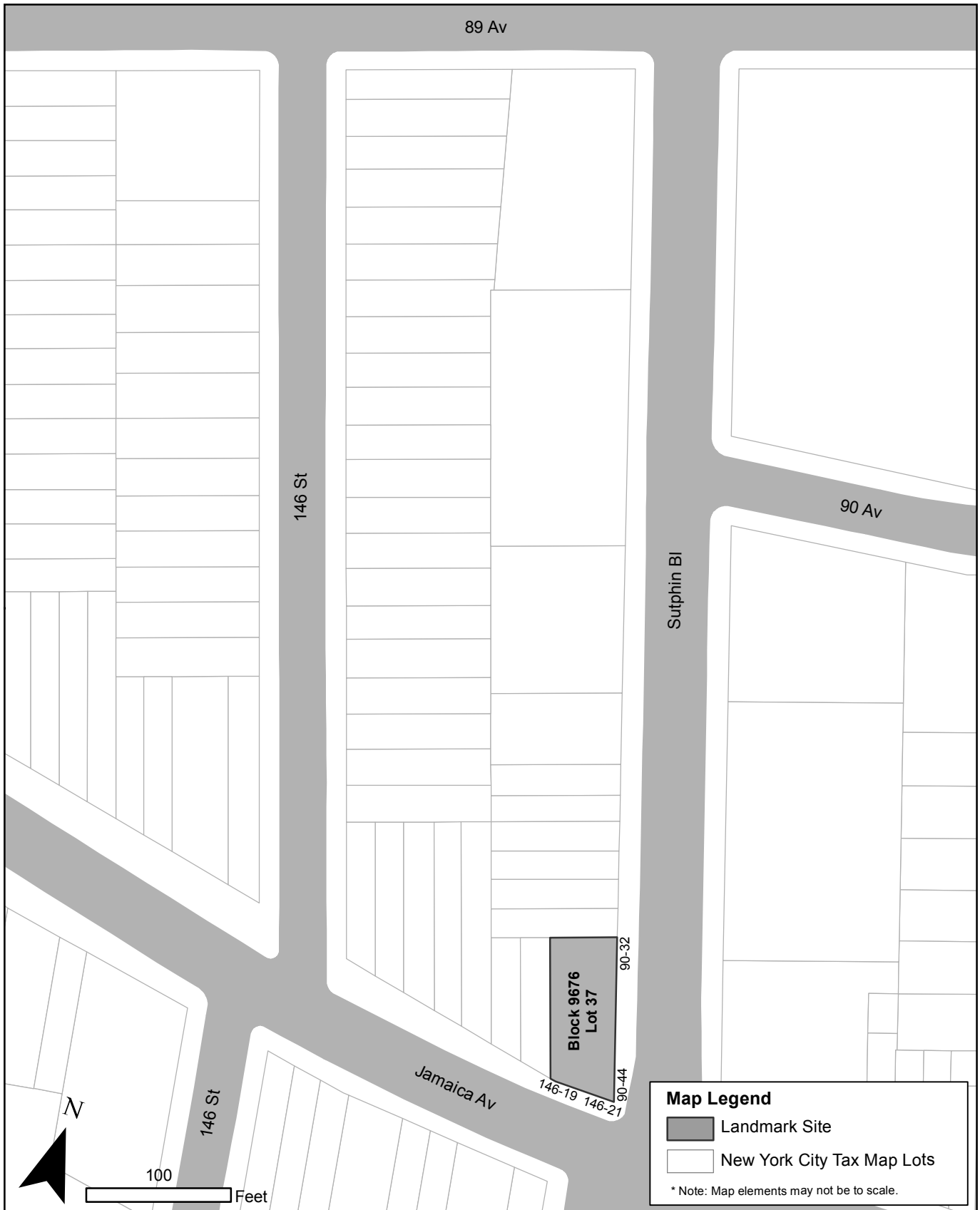


Jamaica Savings Bank  
Detail

*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*



Jamaica Savings Bank  
Detail  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*



JAMAICA SAVINGS BANK (LP-2393), 146-21 Jamaica Avenue, (aka 146-19 to 146-21 Jamaica Avenue; 90-32 to 90-44 Sutphin Boulevard). Landmark Site: Borough of Queens, Tax Map Block 9676, Lot 37.

Designated: October 26, 2010