

**(Former) LONG ISLAND HEADQUARTERS of the NEW YORK TELEPHONE COMPANY** 97-105 Willoughby Street (aka 349-371 Bridge Street, and 7 Metrotech Center), Brooklyn. Built 1929-30; Ralph Walker of Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2058, Lot 1.

On June 15, 2004, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the (Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company building and its related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were two speakers in favor of designation, including a representative of the owner of the building, Verizon New York Inc., and a representative of the Historic Districts Council. The Commission has also received a letter of support from Councilman David Yassky. There were no speakers opposed to designation.

### Summary

The Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company, built in 1929-30, is a masterful example of the series of tall structures issuing from architect Ralph Walker's long and productive association with the communications industry. Walker was a prominent New York architect whose expressive tall buildings, prolific writings and professional leadership made him one of the foremost representatives of his field during his long life. In this dramatically-massed, orange brick skyscraper, Walker illustrates his exceptional ability to apply the Art Deco style to a large office tower. Its abstract, metal ornament on the ground story display windows and the main entrance on Bridge Street, suggests constant movement, and is typical of the art of late 1920s. The structure is faced with multiple sizes of brick, laid in a variety of patterns and planes to create a rich façade design. Horizontal panels of patterned brick enhance each setback leading to the central tower. At the same time, the verticality of the structure is emphasised by narrow sections of façade that soar upward, above others, and by the way the brick is laid to create undulating vertical planes suggestive of draperies. Through his series of telephone company buildings, many of Walker's design ideas evolved so that here he achieved a tremendous sense of harmony and refinement in his use of brick and metalwork, as well as in the overall massing. The location of this large, important structure in downtown Brooklyn emphasized the commitment of New York Telephone Company to the growth and advancement of the most modern telephone service to the expanding area of Brooklyn and Long Island. In this Long Island Headquarters Building Walker was able to apply the Art Deco style and create a skyscraper which met the technological needs of the client and the demands of the New York City Building Code.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### New York Telephone Company<sup>1</sup>

Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone in 1876 and his patents on transmitting equipment led to the incorporation of the Bell Telephone Company in 1877 in Massachusetts. The introduction of Bell's machine at the Centennial Exhibition created interest and awareness of the new system, convincing the original investors of the value of the revolutionary technology. From the outset, the company decided to lease rather than sell the telephone instruments to protect its patent rights. Originally, the telephone system connected users by a single line from one point to another. The limitations of this arrangement quickly became clear, and led to the introduction, in 1878, of the telephone switch and central exchange (or switchboard with operators).<sup>2</sup> With this arrangement, local telephones within a service area were connected at the exchange to all others served by the same provider, and through them, were eventually able to connect with other exchanges to provide unlimited service. At the same time, the New England Telephone Company was founded to construct, maintain and lease telephones, call bells and telephone lines in that part of the country. Several other small, independent operators started their own local exchanges using leased equipment from the Bell Company and paying monthly fees to subscribe to their exchange. As the system expanded, it became obvious that it would be more useful and economical if everyone used the same types of exchanges so that they could interact, thus preventing a duplication of effort. The Bell Company furthered this process by licensing local exchanges and leasing equipment to them, but leaving the ownership and management up to local operators. These exchanges reached into all cities in the United States within a few years.

In 1878, under pressure of competition from the larger Western Union Company, the Bell Telephone Company reorganized with the New England Telephone Company to form the National Bell Company. Other Bell subsidiary companies were established throughout the United States to run telephone lines and maintain exchanges, and in 1882 the Chicago-based manufacturing firm, Western Electric, was acquired by National Bell to provide telephone equipment exclusively to the Bell subsidiaries. Two of the earliest local providers were the Metropolitan Telephone and Telegraph Company (founded in 1878 with a central switching office in Manhattan and 271 subscribers) and the New York and New Jersey Telephone Company (founded in 1883). By 1885, another division, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, was formed as a subsidiary of the National Bell Company, with a specific mandate to build and operate a long distance network, a process that required a different technological system as well as the cooperation of the various local exchanges. A further reorganization at the end of 1899 resulted in the New York-based American Telephone and Telegraph Company becoming the parent company of the Bell system, increasing its control of the Bell operating companies and other more independent exchanges throughout the country.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 1907, under A T & T, the engineering department was consolidated with Western Electric and the Long Lines Department was restructured. The many regional service providers were grouped according to larger geographical areas, and in 1909, the six companies then serving the New York metropolitan area were consolidated as the New York Telephone Company. This arrangement endured until the court-mandated divestiture in 1984, when the company became NYNEX, then Bell Atlantic New York Inc., then finally Verizon New York Inc., which continues to provide telephone service to the area today.

### Telephone Growth in Brooklyn and Long Island

Brooklyn grew rapidly in the late nineteenth century, and by 1900 its population reached 1.1 million. During the early years of the twentieth century, local businesses as well as rapid transit also expanded, enabling the increasing population to move into vast sections of Brooklyn previously used only as farms. As residential districts spread beyond the core into the more rural and less expensive areas of Long Island, the market for telephone service grew exponentially. The New York and New Jersey Telephone Company, which had been founded to bring telephone service to all of Long Island, as well as New Jersey and Staten Island, extended its service to the furthest reaches of Long Island.<sup>4</sup> By the early years of the twentieth century, the company had central switching offices (some with automatic switching systems) as far east as Lawrence and Far Rockaway, with others in Richmond Hill, Flushing and in the Nassau County Courthouse.<sup>5</sup>

The New York and New Jersey Telephone Company ceased to exist after the reorganization of AT&T in 1909. At that time service areas were reconfigured to align more closely with state lines. All service to

New York and Long Island was taken over by the New York Telephone Company, while New Jersey received its telephone service from New Jersey Bell Telephone Company. The service provided by the New York Telephone Company continued to expand as the population rose and its need for telephones grew. The boom years of the 1920s created a huge expansion and the New York Telephone Company wanted to move its Long Island Headquarters from 81 Willoughby Street to a larger facility. For their new building, the company turned to architect Ralph Walker, who had already designed several related structures in Manhattan.

#### Ralph Walker and the Firm of Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker<sup>6</sup>

In 1919, when Ralph Walker joined the architectural firm where he was to make his name, it was known as McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin. This firm had been established in 1910 with the partnership of Andrew McKenzie (1861-1926), Stephen Voorhees (1878-1965), and Paul Gmelin (1859-1937). McKenzie had previously been in partnership with Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz (from 1902 until 1909), son of renowned New York architect Leopold Eidlitz. Voorhees was a civil engineer trained at Princeton University, who had worked for Eidlitz & McKenzie as an engineer and superintendent of construction. German-born and trained Paul Gmelin had worked previously for McKim, Mead & White, and Babb, Cook & Willard before joining with McKenzie and Voorhees to form the new firm. McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin (1910-1925) did a considerable amount of work for the New York Telephone Company, an association that had begun with the designs of two downtown telephone company buildings by their predecessor Cyrus Eidlitz (1885-86 and 1890). The first structure that McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin, with Cyrus Eidlitz, designed for the telephone company was the original section of the Long Distance Building at 32 Sixth Avenue (1911-14, enlarged in 1914-16, enlarged again, with new facades in 1930-32, a designated New York City Landmark). By 1912, the firm (under its various partnerships) had completed approximately thirty new telephone buildings in New York City alone (in addition to alterations and expansions).<sup>7</sup> McKenzie, Voorhees, & Gmelin also designed other telephone company buildings in Albany and Buffalo, the Brooklyn Edison Company Building, and the Brooklyn Municipal Building (1924-27) as well as a number of private residences.

Ralph Walker (1889-1973) was born in Waterbury, Connecticut. His unconventional architectural training included a two-year apprenticeship with the architectural firm of Hilton & Jackson, in Providence, Rhode Island, starting in 1907. He then enrolled as a special student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This was followed, in 1911, by a period of study with Francis Swales (1878-1962) in Montreal. In 1913, Walker practiced architecture with James Ritchie in Boston and three years later won the Rotch Traveling Scholarship enabling him to tour Europe. His trip had to be postponed due to World War I, during which time Walker served in France with the Army Corps of Engineers. Upon his return, Walker worked briefly in the offices of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, and York & Sawyer.

Walker's first assignment upon joining the firm of McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin, was the Barclay-Vesey Building for the New York Telephone Company (1923-26, 140 West Street, a designated New York City Landmark) which gained him immediate fame. As this building neared completion, and following the death of McKenzie, Walker became a partner in the firm, and the name was changed to Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker. The success of the Barclay-Vesey Building and subsequent commissions brought Walker recognition as one of the city's preeminent designers of Art Deco skyscrapers. Walker was a prolific architect, working almost exclusively for corporate clients, especially for AT&T, and becoming a specialist in the design of that company's buildings. Among his subsequent commissions were the Western Union Building, at 60 Hudson Street (1928-30, a designated New York City Landmark), and an extension and rebuilding of the Long Distance Building of AT&T at 32 Sixth Avenue (1930-32, a designated New York City Landmark), as well as the 1 Wall Street Building (1929-31, the former Irving Trust Company Building, a designated New York City Landmark). Walker also designed buildings for General Foods and IBM, and several pavilions at the 1939 World's Fair.

Active in professional circles, Walker served as president of several architectural organizations, including the state and national levels of the American Institute of Architects. He was a prolific writer on architectural subjects, devoting many articles to the concept of modern design.<sup>8</sup> He was the recipient of numerous architectural awards and citations, and in 1957 the AIA awarded Walker the title of "architect of the century." In 1958 Walker resigned from active participation in the firm, then known as Voorhees, Walker, Smith, Smith & Haines, although he continued to lecture and serve on many professional and

civic design committees. The architectural firm has continued under various names and is known today as HLW International LLP.<sup>9</sup>

### Art Deco Style<sup>10</sup>

The Art Deco or Modernistic style of architecture primarily appeared in this country from the mid-1920s through the 1930s. It has been called an “avant-garde traditionalist”<sup>11</sup> approach to creating a contemporary idiom for buildings of the period. As in other self-conscious modern periods, designers and critics of this time articulated the need for a new style that could be deemed appropriate for the vibrant period dubbed the “Jazz Age,” and all its accompanying technological developments. They believed that the historically-derived ornamental motifs applied to most of the tall buildings up to this point were unsuitable for their contemporary era. They were trying to relate architecture to the functionally-derived designs of objects made possible and fostered by the burgeoning machine technology.<sup>12</sup>

Much of the architecture that we know as Art Deco 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 materials, some new and some simply used in a new way. Most of the architects active in this style had received traditional Beaux-Arts training that called for the creation of the plan and elevations as the first and most important phases in the conception of a building. Ornament was then added to these initial designs, based on ideas which evolved from a variety of influences including: the Paris 1925 Exposition International des Arts Decoratifs, the well-publicized designs of the Vienna Secessionists and the Wiener Werkstatte, the German Expressionists, as well as American architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis H. Sullivan, contemporary theatrical set designs, and Mayan and other Native American forms.

The overall shape of tall buildings of this period came about as a result of the 1916 Building Zone Resolution of New York, which mandated setbacks at numerous levels to allow light and air to reach the lower stories of buildings in an increasingly dense city. In 1922, architect and critic Harvey Wiley Corbett (1873-1954) and architectural renderer Hugh Ferriss (1889-1962) explored the possibilities created by the zoning law in a series of drawings that illustrated progressive stages of design based on the law’s height and mass restrictions. These dramatic renderings, published in *Pencil Points* (1923) and in *Metropolis of Tomorrow* (1929), significantly influenced architects of the period. The drawings and the laws from which they came directed the architects’ attention to the building as a whole rather than to a single facade of the structure, thus altering the whole design process. By visualizing buildings “from every possible angle” the architect was transformed from a designer of facades into a “sculptor in building masses.”<sup>13</sup> The zoning law provided architects with a sound, rational basis for the form and appearance of the skyscraper as well as a new source of creativity; historical styles did not seem to express the modern sensibility and consequently, a new “skyscraper style” emerged in the 1920s. Major characteristics of the new style, as generated in part by the zoning restrictions, were sculpted massing, bold setbacks, and ornament subordinated to the overall mass. The dramatic rendering style of Ferriss and others articulated this new modernist aesthetic. In addition, an emphasis on the verticality of the tall building was derived from the wide influence of Eliel Saarinen’s second-prize winning competition entry for the Chicago Tribune Building in 1923.

At the same time, the surfaces of these new buildings were treated with little depth, literally as a skin around the framework. This idea came from the work of architects of the Chicago School, which in turn can be traced back to the writings of German architect Gottfried Semper (1803-1879). In an essay, he included as one of the four basic components of architecture the “enclosure of textiles, animal skins, wattle or any other filler hung from the frame or placed between the supporting poles.”<sup>14</sup> This concept led to the idea of wall surfaces being treated like woven fabric, a technique used on several buildings in New York during this period, including the Film Center Building by Ely Jacques Kahn (1928-29, 630 Ninth Avenue, a designated New York City Interior Landmark) and 21 West Street designed by Starrett and Van Vleck (1929-31, a designated New York City Landmark). New materials such as metal alloys were used, but brick and terra cotta were favorites because of their wide range of color and textural possibilities. Buildings were conceived as stage sets for daily living and were treated as such, with entrances taking on the form and function of the proscenium, and with walls that were made to look like curtains. Ornament, usually in low relief and concentrated primarily on the entrances, took the form of angular, geometric shapes such as zigzags and zigzags, or simplified and stylized floral patterns, parts of circles, or faceted crystalline shapes. Reaching its zenith in popularity between 1928 and 1931 in New York City, this new



architectural style was used most noticeably for skyscrapers. By the time of its critical re-assessment in the 1960s and 1970s this "modernistic" style had achieved the popular name of Art Deco after the 1925 Paris Exposition. A tremendous building boom during the last half of the 1920s resulted in numerous tall towers being constructed in this style, such as the Empire State Building, (1929-31, 350 Fifth Avenue), the Chrysler Building (1928-30, 405 Lexington Avenue), and the Daily News Building (1929-30, 220 East 42nd Street,) in midtown, as well as the Manhattan Company Building (1929-30, 40 Wall Street), the City Bank-Farmers Trust Company Building (1930-31, 20 Exchange Place) and the Irving Trust Company Building (1929-32, 1 Wall Street) downtown, all designated New York City Landmarks.

#### The Communications Buildings of Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker<sup>15</sup>

The Long Island Headquarters Building was one of a series of communications buildings that Ralph Walker and the firm of Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker designed and built during the late 1920s in the New York and New Jersey metropolitan area. These buildings are similar enough to be considered a "house style;" each is a variation on a theme established by Walker's well-defined theory. The first in the series was the Barclay-Vesey Building (1923-27), followed by the New Jersey Bell Headquarters Building in Newark, New Jersey (1928-29). The Western Union Building<sup>16</sup> and telephone buildings in Syracuse and Rochester were nearly contemporaneous in 1928-30. Subsequent communications buildings in this series include the Long Distance Building of A T & T (1930-32), 435 West 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan, (1929-30), 206 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street Manhattan (1929-30), the exchange building in Hempstead Long Island (1930) and this Long Island Headquarters in Brooklyn.

These communications buildings house both equipment and offices. This dual use called for large, undivided floor areas for equipment and operators that could be placed around a central service core. The massing of the buildings, therefore, reflects the aesthetics of the new setback form that had developed, in part, in response to the 1916 Building Zone Resolution, rather than a form governed by required light courts. Designed to be occupied by a single tenant and to fit that corporation's program, these structures were considered by the architect to demand a consistency and unity of architectural expression.<sup>17</sup> The image of the machine age was extended to the building as a whole; Walker wrote that the Barclay-Vesey Building was conceived of as a "machine which had certain definite functions to perform economically for the benefit of its occupants."<sup>18</sup>

Walker's designs for the exterior walls of the communications buildings reflect his response to the theoretical problem of how to express the steel-frame structure. The walls display a fairly balanced grid of wide piers and only slightly less accentuated spandrels, corresponding to the post and girder system of the structure and allowing for a nearly equal balance of window and wall which Walker considered the ideal for comfortable interior illumination. The walls of several of the later communications buildings are modeled, with areas of accentuated, massed piers combined with flatter wall surfaces to emphasize the verticality of the structure and, in some cases, create a cascading effect at the setbacks. This later approach expresses Walker's concept of the wall as merely a membrane or curtain to enclose the steel-frame structure. He believed that the architect "makes the balance between the structure and the skin which is its covering, and the requirements of man..."<sup>19</sup>

The use of brick for the communications buildings was a "natural selection," due to the wide variety of color and the possibilities of ornamental treatment, which seemed more functional and therefore, more suitable to a building of this type than any other material.<sup>20</sup> The firm used brick in the manner similar to that of the German Expressionist architects, such as Fritz Hoeger, who considered the brick as "architecture's precious stone."<sup>21</sup> Ralph Walker was noted by the brick industry as a frequent user of brick for economic reasons and durability. He designed with brick in a manner that let the material stand on its own, providing much of the ornament which he felt should enrich a skyscraper and "repay repeated study," without attempting to imitate stone.<sup>22</sup>

This "house style" developed by Walker and the Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker firm in the late 1920s has characteristic features, which have come to be identified with the Art Deco style, that varied in prominence in the designs and evolved over time. In the early Barclay-Vesey and the New Jersey Bell Telephone Buildings, many elements of the style appear -- complex massing with a vertical emphasis, aesthetic integration of the exterior and interior spaces, and faceted forms. In the later examples, the elaborate figural ornamental programs are less in evidence and the importance of stone ornament is superseded by a fuller realization of the ornamental qualities of brick. There is a steady trend toward an expressive design approach in these buildings. This aesthetic informed Walker's other work as well and is

very much in evidence in the design of the Irving Trust Building, which differs from the communications buildings primarily in its stone cladding.

#### The Long Island Headquarters Building

The Long Island Headquarters Building was constructed to provide central offices for the growing telephone service needs of Brooklyn and Long Island. Twenty-seven stories tall, with its long side facing Bridge Street, this building replaced twelve smaller buildings on the site. Its existence allowed the consolidation to one location of approximately 3,500 employees from a variety of other offices.<sup>23</sup>

Walker used many of the same ideas on this building that he had employed on other telephone company buildings, but here there is a greater refinement and harmony due to his earlier design experiences. The narrow tower rising from a broad base was a similar arrangement to the other structures, reflecting the requirements of the recent zoning law. In this Brooklyn building, Walker was able to make the transition from broad to narrow in a particularly well-integrated manner, by allowing parts of some sections to continue to rise while others stepped back. Although symmetrical, the setbacks appear to be more irregular and the eye is led up the façade without any strong breaks.

The primary ornamentation on this building comes from the manner in which the bricks are laid. The sense of vertical movement created by the setbacks is reinforced by the masterful bricklaying in the central section of the two main façades. The brick is placed to create varied planes in an undulating effect, as if it were folds of cloth, reflecting Walker's sense of the wall as a curtain enclosing the steel structure. This three dimensional appearance adds variety and interest to the central parts of the facades, while emphasizing the vertical, as it continues through the numerous setbacks. Beyond the center sections, the smaller bricks used to face the rest of the ground story are set in a stacked, header bond so that their square ends face the front. The slight variation of colors here and the small-scale patterns enhance the texture of the façade. This is further emphasized by the distinctive brick course at each sill and lintel level which is a composed of rectangular header bricks, and which circumscribe the side sections of the building horizontally. Further virtuosity in the brickwork is seen at the parapets which mark each setback and in the areas surrounding the secondary entrances. The entrances are framed by stepped brickwork with intertwined horizontal and vertical projections, again suggesting woven material, in further homage to the German Expressionists. Each parapet is distinguished by a variety of projecting horizontal and vertical shapes as well, but here they appear less intertwined. The shadows produced by the projections and the irregular top edges, which are finished with cast stone caps, provide a distinctive finish for the setback sections.

As Walker's ability to fully exploit his primary material evolved, he made a more limited use of other materials. On this building only the ground story windows and the main entrance on Bridge Street are enhanced by metal open-work screens. The abstract ornament that frames each window has an effect of lightness and movement, created by its vertical lines, its stylized fountains and its irregular top profile. The dark metal contrasts vividly with the generally monotone brick façade, making them stand out more emphatically.

#### Description

The (former) Long Island Headquarters Building of the New York Telephone Company is located at the corner of Willoughby and Bridge Streets in downtown Brooklyn. Twenty-seven stories tall, the building rises through a series of set-backs to a tower at the center of the primary, Bridge Street façade. Set on a granite base, it is faced with iron-spot orange brick, laid in a variety of patterns to distinguish the various sections and the set-backs of the structure. Decorative metalwork surrounds the display windows with their original sash, and the main entry on the ground story. The windows of the upper stories have (except where noted) unadorned, rectangular openings with 1/1 aluminum replacement sash.

**Bridge Street Façade:** The *ground story* of this façade is characterized by an almost central, pedestrian entrance, with five bays to the south, toward Willoughby Street and six bays to the north, toward Myrtle Street. The entrance, which has four replacement metal and glass doors, is deeply recessed within the main plane of the building. A large decorative metal and glass transom, which includes a small sign stating "Bell Telephone," tops the doors. Patterned brickwork continues the vertical lines of the metal design through an extremely deep, stepped and patterned brick reveal. A service entrance, framed by stepped decorative brick patterning resembling woven material is located in the northern bay of the Bridge Street façade. The opening is filled by two plain metal replacement doors topped by plain glass transoms and is

flanked by short, non-historic protective walls. In each of the other bays along the ground story of Bridge Street, there is a large display window framed by decorative ironwork. Each opening is filled by a tripartite window, topped by a tripartite transom. The metal spandrel panels display wavy horizontal lines, while above the windows are openwork panels of decorative metal work in an abstract pattern, applied over the brick walls. The panels, which have an irregular top profile, are composed of vertical lines and an assortment of horizontal and diagonal lines suggesting stylized fountains.

The *central section* of the building on the ground story, consists of the main entrance way, and three large windows to each side. Above the double-height ground story, this center section is twelve bays wide, with each large window relating to two plain window openings in the floors above, plus a single window bay flanking the entry. Its façade is distinguished by bricks laid in projecting vertical patterns which suggest undulating fabric draperies and emphasize the verticality of the building. This unique brick patterning continues in this central section through the various setbacks until it reaches the top of the main tower. These set-backs appear above parts of the ninth, twelfth, thirteenth, fifteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, twenty-third, and twenty-sixth stories of the building. The side walls of several of the central set-backs recede at an angle from the front plane of the building, continuing the vertical brick patterns of the front facade. The top of each set-back is marked by a band of three-dimensional brick patterning with cast stone caps at the edge. The top of the tower finishes with faceted, undulating walls surrounding four pairs of narrow (original) casement windows.

*To each side of the central section*, the building also sets back symmetrically, but at the ninth, twelfth, fifteenth and eighteenth stories. There are six bays above the ground story on the southern side of the Bridge Street façade, and eight bays on the northern side. The wall treatment of these side sections is different from the central area, using flat rather than undulating walls. On the ground story, reaching to the sill line of the second story windows, courses of rectangular brick headers alternate with courses of square headers set in stacked bond, creating a richly-textured façade. Above this, the sill and lintel courses at each story are laid as rectangular headers while the rest of the façade is normal, stretcher brick. Each set-back of the side sections is marked by patterned brick parapets with horizontal and vertical projections.

**Willoughby Street.** The Willoughby Street façade is symmetrical, with secondary entrances in the eastern and western bays on the ground story and two large display windows between them. On the west is a non-historic storefront, set within the stepped recess of the end bay and surrounded by projecting brickwork in the same type of woven pattern as seen at the service entrance on Bridge Street. The storefront itself has been replaced with non-historic material. On the east is another, larger, stepped opening with similar brick patterning around it. It is enclosed by an ornate bronze gate in a pattern similar to that over the windows. Inside the opening is a vaulted and faceted, brick-lined vestibule which leads to an original metal and glass doorway, and is enhanced by an original bronze, hanging light fixture. The two large windows between these entrances have the same configuration and ornament as those on Bridge Street. Above the ground floor, the central section has six bays of plain windows, and is distinguished by undulating brickwork with vertical patterns as on Bridge Street. This central section rises for nine stories above the ground story, to the first set-back. Other setbacks occur at the eleventh, thirteenth and fifteenth stories on this façade, each marked by special patterned brick bands. The set-backs lead to the top of the tower, which has the same undulating brick patterns separated by four bays of paired windows as on Bridge Street. To each side of the central section, there are two bays faced with the same brick patterns in a flat façade treatment as seen on the other façade. These sections set back first at the ninth story, followed by the twelfth and fifteenth stories.

The rear façade of the tower is visible over the buildings on Duffield Street. Much of the wall has no window openings although the undulating wall surface and the set-backs still exist, leading to the central, narrow tower. The northern façade, toward Metrotech, is not visible. There is mechanical equipment and antennas on various setbacks and roof surfaces.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The information about the development of the telephone system comes from the following sources: Robert W. Garnet, *The Telephone Enterprise, The Evolution of the Bell System's Horizontal Structure, 1876-1909* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); John Brooks, *Telephone, The First Hundred Years* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); Herbert Laws Webb, "The Telephone of Today," *The New England Magazine* 16 (June, 1894), 461-478; [www.att.com/history/history1.html](http://www.att.com/history/history1.html); Charles L. Brown, "The Bell System," *Encyclopedia of Telecommunications* (1991, Marcel Dekker, Inc.).

<sup>2</sup> The first such exchange was located in New Haven, Connecticut, under license from Bell Telephone Company.

<sup>3</sup> This organizational structure continued for most of the next century until the court-mandated divestiture in 1984.

<sup>4</sup> This was not accomplished without competition from other companies "Latest Long Island News," *The Brooklyn Eagle* (May 23, 1895).

<sup>5</sup> "Automatic Telephones Now in Use at Queens," *The Brooklyn Eagle* (July 13, 1902).

<sup>6</sup> Much of the information about Ralph Walker and his firm comes from Landmarks Preservation Commission designation reports and research files for 1 Wall Street Building LP-2029, Western Union Building LP-1749, The Long Distance Building of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company LP-1747, and the Barclay-Vesey Building LP-1747.

<sup>7</sup> Voorhees, Walker, Smith, Smith & Haines, *Telephone Buildings Since 1885* (New York, 1961), 39-45.

<sup>8</sup> Some of his many articles were published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, *Pencil Points*, and *American Architect*.

<sup>9</sup> Previous to this, the firm was called Haines Lundberg Waehler.

<sup>10</sup> Much of the information in this section is adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Barclay-Vesey Building Designation Report* (LP-1745) (New York: City of New York, 1991), report prepared by David Breiner; LPC, *The Long Distance Building of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company Designation Report* (LP-1747) (New York: City of New York, 1991), report prepared by David Breiner; LPC, *Western Union Building Designation Report* (LP-1749) (New York: City of New York, 1991), report prepared by Betsy Bradley; Rosemarie Haag Bletter, "The Art Deco Style," in Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter, *Skyscraper Style, Art Deco New York* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1975); David Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* (NY: Preservation Press, 1996); and the Landmarks Preservation Commission research files

<sup>11</sup> Bletter, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Sheldon Cheney, *The New World Architecture* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1930).

<sup>13</sup> H.W. Corbett, "Architecture," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1929), 275, quoted in LPC, *Barclay-Vesey Building*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Bletter, 61

<sup>15</sup> This section is based on LPC, *Western Union Building Designation Report LP-1749*, which also takes information from Robinson and Bletter, Robert A. M. Stern, *New York, 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars*, (NY: Rizzoli, 1987); and other LPC designation reports.

<sup>16</sup> Although not strictly the same company, the design of this building followed the same design theory in a similar industry.

<sup>17</sup> Edgar Albright, "New Jersey Bell Telephone Building as an Example of Modern Building Design," Illuminating Engineering Society, *Transactions* 25 (May, 1930), 485-488. Edgar Albright joined the firm in 1929 and was described by Lovewell in 1931 as a design assistant to Walker. In his articles about the Western Union and New Jersey Bell Buildings it is assumed that he conveyed Walker's views about the design.

<sup>18</sup> Ralph Walker, "The Barclay-Vesey Telephone Building," *American Architect* 130 (Nov. 20, 1926), 387-399.

<sup>19</sup> Ralph Walker, "Architecture of Today, An American Architect's View," *Creative Art* 5 (July, 1929), 460-465.

<sup>20</sup> Edgar Albright, "Sketches Illustrating the Design Development of an Office Building, the Western Union Telegraph Building, Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, Architects," *The Architectural Record* 66 (July, 1929), 1-9.

<sup>21</sup> Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* (New York: Praeger Publ., 1973), 27.

<sup>22</sup> Albright, "Sketches," 9; Walker, "The Barclay-Vesey Telephone Building," 398; and "New York Architects and Clay Products," *Brick and Clay Record* 77 (Dec. 30, 1930), 772-773.

<sup>23</sup> "27-Story Building To Rise in Brooklyn," *The New York Times* (Nov. 17, 1929), N2.



On the basis of careful consideration of the history, architecture and other features of the building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the (Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company 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 the (Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company, designed in 1929 and constructed 1929-30, is an outstanding example of the Art Deco style applied to a skyscraper which meets the technological needs of the client and the zoning requirements of the New York City Building Code; that the building's architect, Ralph Walker of the firm of Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, was one of New York's preeminent twentieth century architects and a master of the Art Deco style; that Walker designed numerous tall buildings for the telephone company and was able to translate the company's technological needs into an exceptional and identifiable body of work executed in brick and using the Art Deco style; that largely because of his work, the Art Deco style became synonymous with modernity and the rapid advancement of technology in the late 1920s; that telephone service to Brooklyn and Long Island had continuously expanded with additional service requiring larger and more technically advanced buildings; that in moving to this larger building from its previous home a block away; and constructing this dramatic headquarters building, the New York Telephone Company marked its commitment to a vibrant downtown Brooklyn and the Long Island customers it served; that the building's dramatic massing, its intricate and finely laid brickwork, and its evocative ironwork work together to create a unique and striking presence in a busy section of Brooklyn.

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 (Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company, 97-101 Willoughby Street (aka 349-371 Bridge Street and 7 Metrotech Center), Borough of Brooklyn, and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2058, Lot 1 as its Landmark Site.

Robert Tierney, Chair  
Stephen Byrns, Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Meredith Kane, Christopher Moore,  
Thomas Pike, Jan Pokorny, Elizabeth Ryan, Vicki Match Suna, Commissioners



(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company  
97-101 Willoughby Street, Brooklyn  
Bridge Street facade  
*Photo: Carl Foster*



(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company  
97-101 Willoughby Street, Brooklyn  
Willoughby Street facade  
*Photo: Carl Foster*



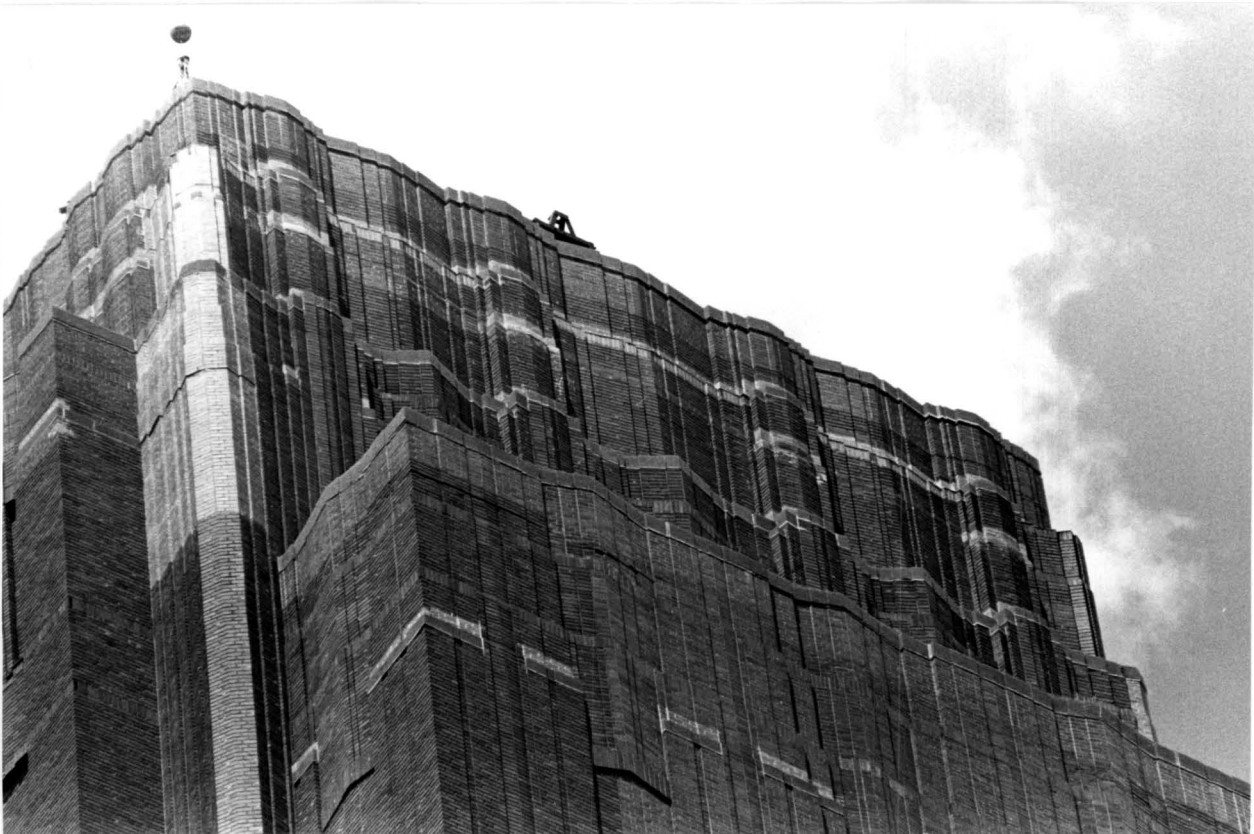
Ground story on Bridge Street

(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company



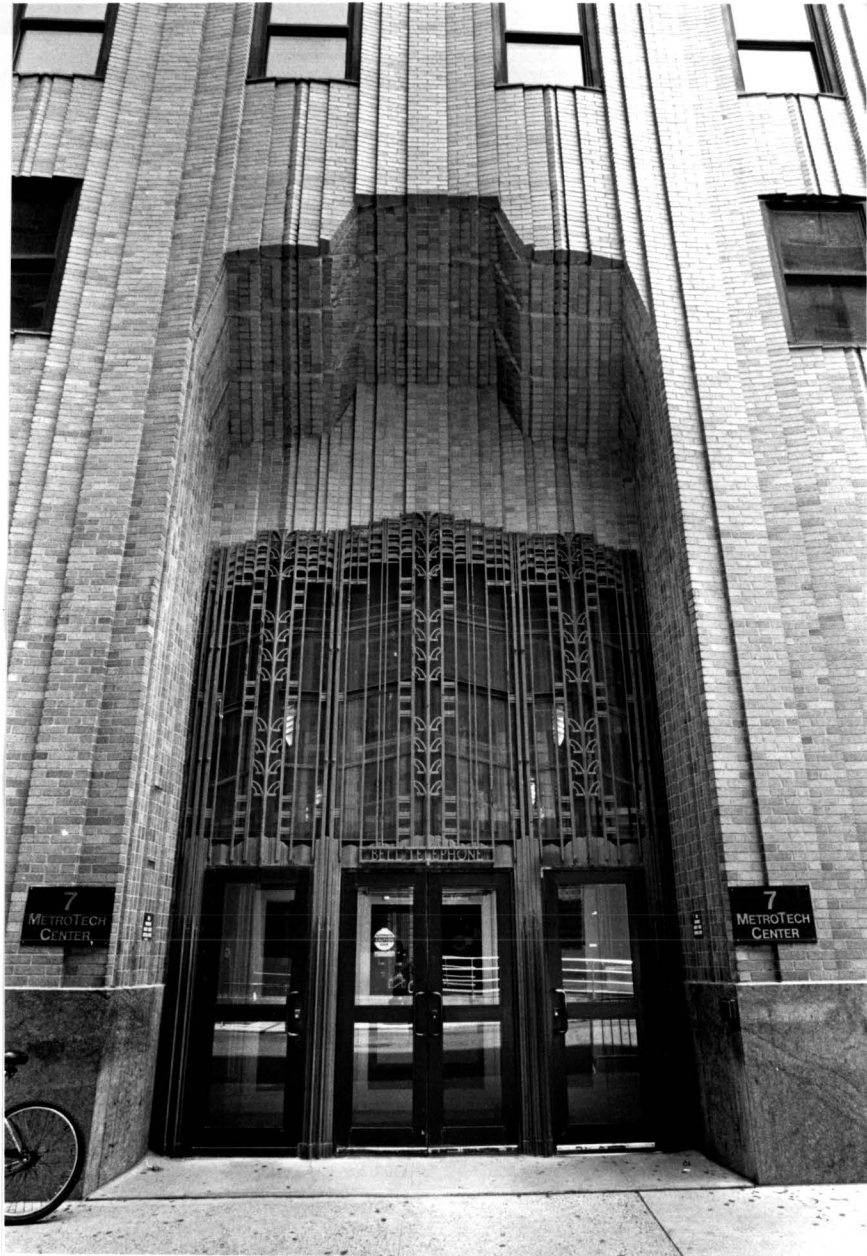
Brick ceiling of Willoughby Street entrance  
Photos: Carl Forster





(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company  
Top of tower details

*Photo: Carl Forster*



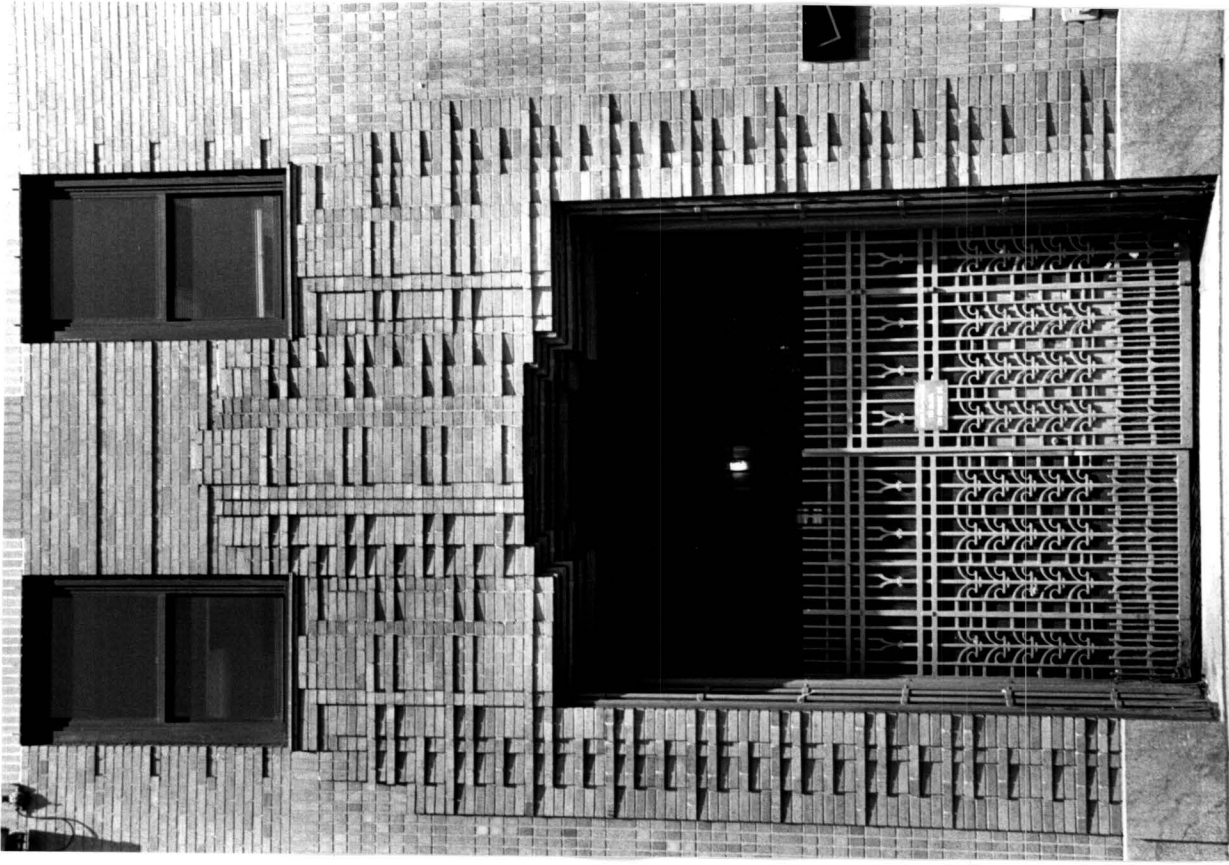
Main entrance, Bridge Street



Service entrance, Bridge Street

(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company

*Photos: Carl Forster*



Entrance, eastern bay of Willoughby Street



Entrance, western bay of Willoughby Street

(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company

*Photos: Carl Forster*





Top of tower, Willoughby Street

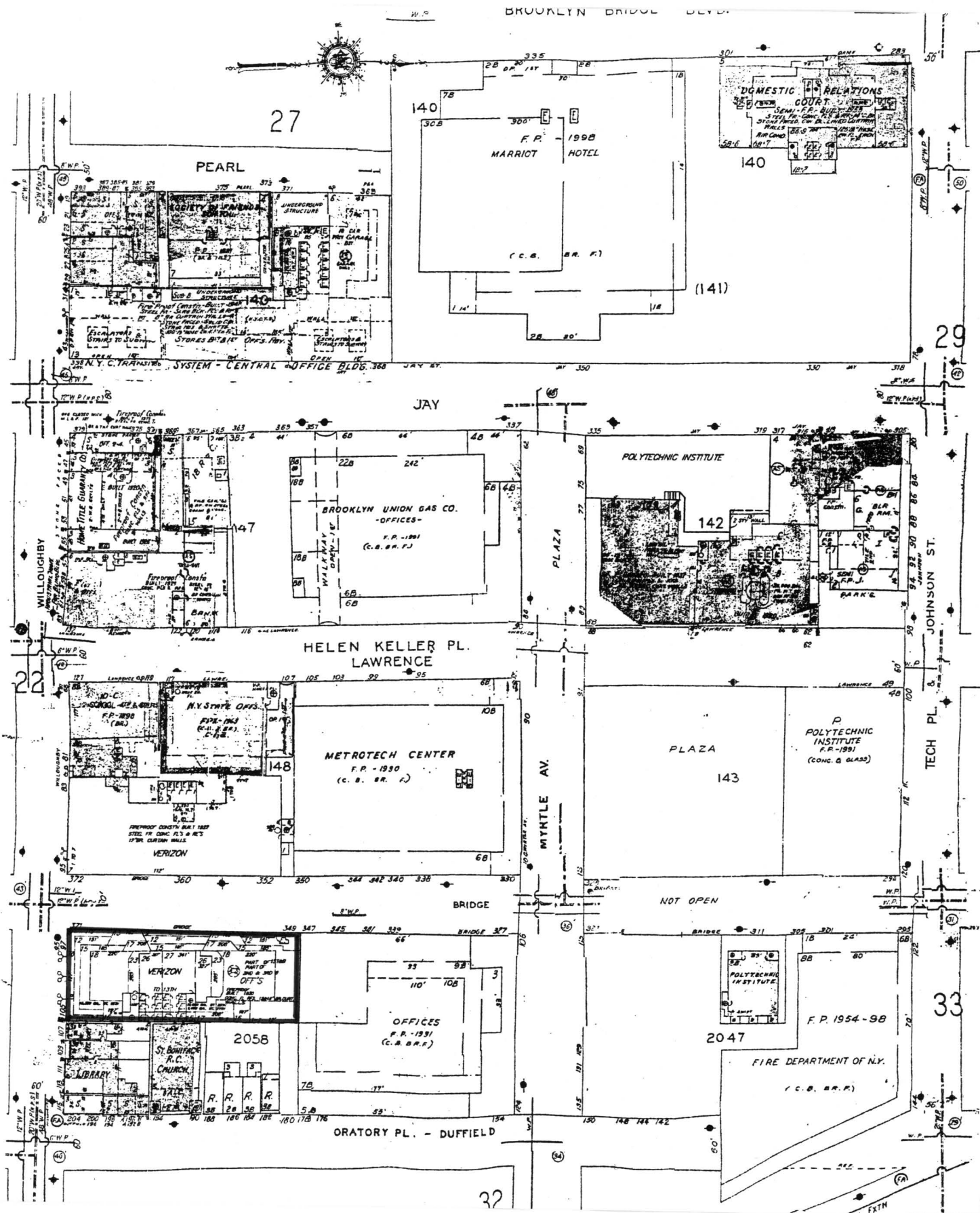


Street level display window

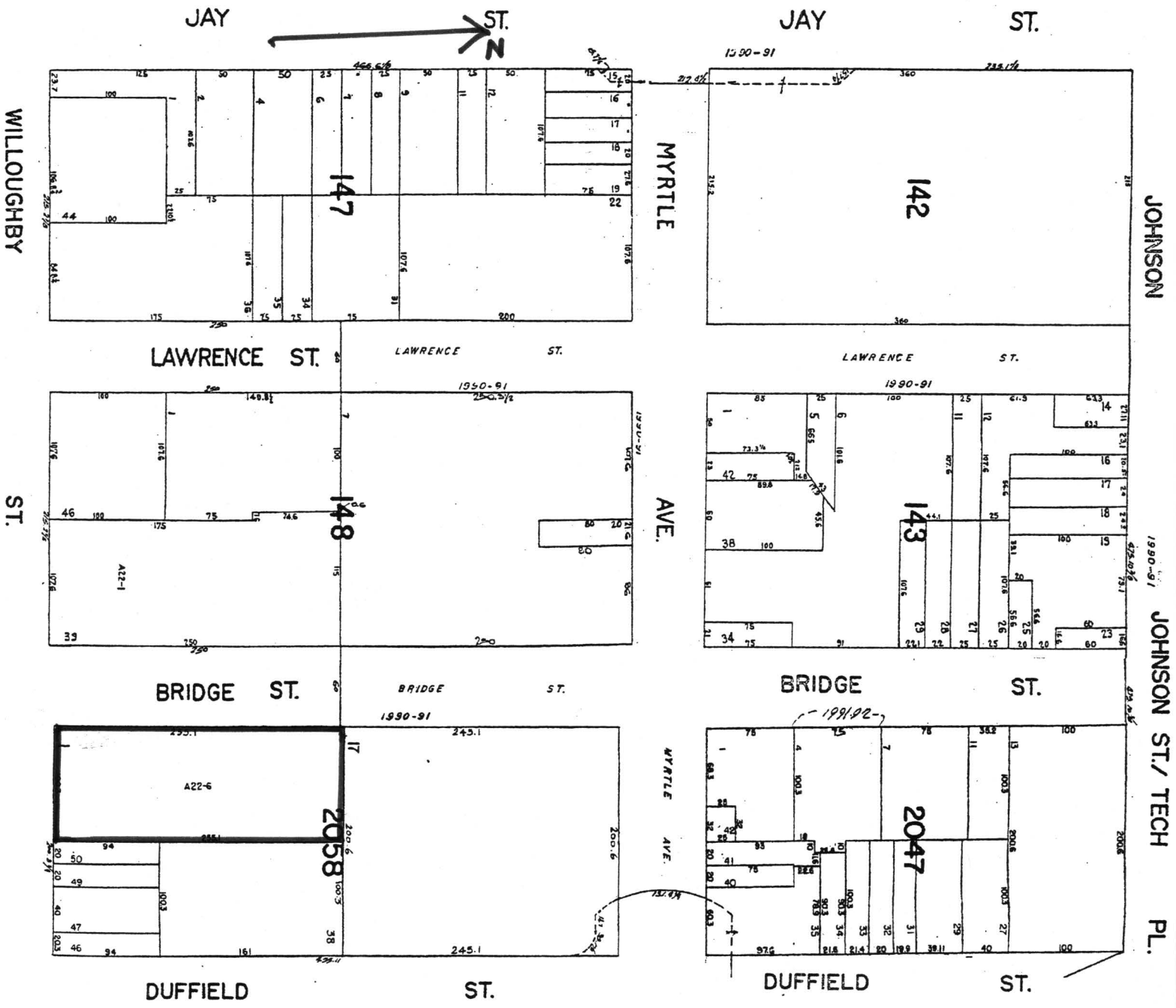
(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company

*Photos: Carl Forster*





(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company  
 97-101 Willoughby Street, Brooklyn  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2058, Lot 1  
 Source: Sanborn Building and Property Atlas: Brooklyn, NY, Region 1, Book 1, Volume 2, Plate 28



(Former) Long Island Headquarters of the New York Telephone Company  
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