

Landmarks Preservation Commission
August 14, 1990; Designation List 226
LP-1658

CLAREMONT STABLES (now Claremont Riding Academy), 173-177 West 89th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1892, architect Frank A. Rooke.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1220, Lot 5.

On April 19, 1988, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Claremont Riding Academy, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 8). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. A total of eight witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has received several letters supporting this designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

Built in 1892, the Claremont Stables was designed in the then popular Romanesque Revival style by Frank A. Rooke. Now the oldest functioning commercial stable in Manhattan,¹ it was constructed as a livery stable containing space for horse stalls and carriage storage. There horses and carriages could be had for hire, and horses could be boarded for a fixed rate. Claremont is a rare survivor of a once common building type, and its rarity is enhanced because virtually all other stables that survive in Manhattan have been converted to other uses or stand vacant. Rooke's Romanesque Revival style design is distinguished by such characteristics as five arched bays at the ground story with the large central bay for horse traffic, arched window openings at the upper stories, and bands of fretwork encompassing the word "Claremont" which surmounts the whole. The orderly arrangement of the facade, symmetrical and dignified in appearance, subtly expresses the functions within, while relating this utilitarian structure to the surrounding residential neighborhood. Constructed at a time when horses still provided the primary means of transportation and only six years prior to the first automobile appearing on Manhattan's streets, the Claremont Stables has withstood the domination of motor vehicle transportation and potential demolition through adaptation as a riding academy in 1927, providing facilities for boarding and renting horses and recreation in nearby Central Park.

History of the Claremont Stables

The Claremont Stables building was constructed on land that in the mid-eighteenth century was part of the Charles Ward Apthorp farm. By 1860 the site where the stable structure was later built had been divided into city

lots. On March 14, 1892, it was recorded that Edward W. Bedell purchased nine lots, each 25 feet x 100 feet. On April 6, 1892, he submitted plans for a public "stable" to be built on a parcel 75 feet x 100 feet which combined three of the lots.² Designed by the New York architect Frank A. Rooke, the structure took just under five months to build and was completed on October 4, 1892.

At the same time and also for Bedell, Rooke designed three, two-story, architecturally compatible private stables which were built on the neighboring lots, now 167, 169 and 171 West 89th Street.³ Bedell then sold these private stables to local families.

Stables were a necessity during the period when private urban transportation was limited to horses and carriages. New York City Directories, at the turn of the century, list approximately 750 livery stables. Here one could rent a horse and carriage or board one's own horse. The very wealthy maintained private stables for their horses and carriages. Often, for the sake of convenience, these were located nearby on streets dedicated to stables and similar structures. Public taste, however, dictated that commercial stables be as far away from residences as possible. A commentary in 1901 stated that New York was "made almost unbearable by the foul odors which arise from the stable and poison the atmosphere for blocks around."⁴

At the turn of the century commercial stables were widespread and numerous in Manhattan extending the length of the island from Water Street on the south to East 234th Street on the north. Often they were clustered together, for the reasons mentioned above. On the Upper West Side, in 1902, from West 64th Street to West 97th Street, Central Park West to the Hudson River, there were approximately 117 stables.⁵

Residential development occurred very rapidly on the Upper West Side from 1885 onward. The Claremont Stables was situated on one of the streets in the area which was developed with light industrial structures. Seven stables, including the Claremont, were located on West 89th Street in 1902.⁶ Later a telephone building, garages, and tenements were built on the street, whereas most blocks in the vicinity contained rowhouses and other residential structures.⁷ The 89th Street location provided area residents easy access to horses without being too close to their homes.

On March 2, 1893, Bedell sold the recently completed Claremont public stable to Charles F. Havemeyer, for \$90,000.⁸ Havemeyer and his brother-in-law William B. Duncan, Jr., then leased the structure to Lee and Darius Tallman. The structure had been built with the name "Claremont" in a frieze surmounting the facade. The Tallmans appended their name to the business which first appeared in the 1893-94 city directory as "Tallman's Claremont Stables," and the building was so marked in the 1895 Atlas of Manhattan Island, published by I.A. Lefevre.⁹

It is likely that the Claremont Stables took its name from the Claremont Inn on Riverside Drive at 125th Street (destroyed by fire in 1951)¹⁰ which became a popular site for visitors in the mid-1890s, who

journeyed there by horseback and carriage. The Tallmans' tenure at Claremont was short. In 1898 Egbert B. Seaman and his son Egbert Jr. leased the stable and listed the business as "E.B. Seaman & Son." They ran Claremont along with another stable at 64 East 76th Street at Park Avenue. In 1907 they acquired another at 116 East 75th Street and an additional one in 1910 at 348 Amsterdam Avenue. E.B. Seaman & Son dissolved in 1910, and the "Mason-Seaman Transportation Co." took over the business with C.B. Mason becoming its president, leaving Egbert Seaman Jr. as secretary, his original position. In 1914 the company surrendered its lease back to Havemeyer and Duncan. The stable business changed hands again in 1915 when the Bonavista Stable Company, previously located at 123 West 89th Street, leased the Claremont Stables. Duncan and Havemeyer sold the building in 1921. The Bonavista Stable Co. remained in business until 1926 when the firm was dissolved. In 1927, under new ownership, the stable officially became known as the Claremont Riding Academy, the name which the building still possesses today.¹¹ (See Appendix p. 7).

Claremont's continuous stable use stands in contrast to what happened to most stable structures in Manhattan. Although automobiles were coming into use at the turn of the century, few people took them seriously as dependable substitutes for horses and carriages. It was doubted whether the automobile would replace the horse: "No doubt they will limit the use of cabs drawn by horses, but they will not do away with them. It will still be difficult for the smartest automobile to compete with a smart cab drawn by a smart horse."¹² Some of New York's grandest private stables and carriage houses were even built after 1900, among them, Frank Gould's stable and carriage house in 1901, on West 57th Street (now demolished), and the Helen Miller Gould Stable in 1903, at 213 West 58th Street (a designated New York City Landmark).¹³ However, by 1908 a New York Times editorial proclaimed: "The animals are indeed a prolific source of dust, disease germs, and disease-breeding flies. Cities would be better off without them."¹⁴

In 1907 the Monterey Automobile Garage was constructed at 139 West 89th Street, and in 1934 the three private stables next to Claremont were converted to garages.¹⁵ Even the nearby Cedarhurst, a livery stable at 147 West 83rd Street (built in 1892), switched over to garage use in 1910.¹⁶ From 1900 to 1913 the Business Directory listings of livery stables had decreased from approximately 750 to 500. Claremont's owners withstood the temptation to switch the stable to garage use, and in 1927 it became a riding academy in part to encourage the employment of Central Park's bridle paths.¹⁷ The stable continued to change hands. In December 1943, Irwin J. Novograd (1907-1988), who had come to New York from Poland in 1914 and was then a bookkeeper for Claremont, purchased the building from Emil Wellner.¹⁸

On May 12, 1965, the Claremont Riding Academy, located on Site 32 of the twenty-square block West Side Urban Renewal area, was condemned by the City of New York for demolition.¹⁹ Plans for this site changed, and demolition did not occur. At this writing Claremont is still owned by the city and leased by Paul J. Novograd, Irwin's son. Paul Novograd became president of the Riding Academy in 1984 and continues to run it today, keeping the building in its original use as a horse stable. Not only does Claremont still offer boarding privileges but also private and group lessons

and the opportunity for the public to rent horses and to continue to enjoy the bridle paths in Central Park only two blocks away.²⁰ The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Design and Construction

The Claremont Stables building was designed in 1892 in the then popular Romanesque Revival style. Prevalent in the 1880s and found throughout the Upper West Side, the style was adapted for a number of different building types (including rowhouses, flats buildings, tenements, churches, and commercial buildings, as well as utilitarian structures). The most characteristic feature of the Romanesque Revival style is the use of round arches for door and window openings, which were often executed in molded brick and carved stone. The use of different materials, colors, and textures within a design are other characteristics of this style. The overall aesthetic depends on mass, volume, and scale rather than decorative detailing. Facades are often flanked by square or polygonal towers or pavilions. The whole effect is generally symmetrical, restrained, and elegant.

Symmetrical, restrained elegance is evident in the Claremont's facade. The round-arched door and window openings distinguish it as a Romanesque Revival design. The three large round-arched openings at the ground story reflect the functions of the interior: an elevator entrance at the west, originally for taking carriages to upper floors for storage; a large arched door for horse traffic at the center; and at the east, the stable offices, reached by a short flight of steps, behind which are the ramps which enable the horses to reach their stalls. End pavilions encompass two of the three arches. Molded brick arches with carved limestone impost blocks, the use of various materials (Roman brick and limestone), the contrast of colors (beige and gray) and textures (rough and smooth), are the primary components of the composition. The arrangement of double-hung windows give proper ventilation at the front and back to the horse stalls within. The orderly arrangement of the facade, symmetrical and dignified in appearance, subtly expresses the functions within, while relating this utilitarian structure to the surrounding residential neighborhood.

Originally the stable contained its own grain crusher and blacksmith facilities. The stable floors were designed of coursed concrete, which was considered to be innovative at the time, providing surer footing for the horses and more sanitary drainage. Additional ventilating flues were cut into the walls, and drain piping under the stalls dropped below the ceiling of the floor underneath for easy cleaning.²¹

The Architect²²

Little is known of Frank A. Rooke, architect of the Claremont Stables. His practice was established in New York in 1887, the year in which he designed a building combining a store, a stable, and flats for Loton Horton of the Horton Ice Cream Co. at 371 Amsterdam Avenue in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District. Rooke formed a partnership in 1888 with Paul F. Higgs. Known works by Higgs & Rooke include a row of seven houses built in 1889, on 10th Street in what is now the Park Slope Historic District in Brooklyn, and in Manhattan a pair of houses on West 92nd Street, a single house on West 77th Street, and a pair on West 147th Street, all built in 1890. Active until that year, the partnership also produced a Romanesque Revival style flats building in 1889-90 in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District adjacent to the building designed by Rooke. Loton also commissioned this flats building. When Rooke designed the Claremont Stables in 1892 as well as the adjacent stables at 167, 169, and 171 West 89th Street, he was again in private practice. It is known that he designed a building on Webster Avenue in the Bronx, in 1914.

Description

The four-story stable structure, located on the north side of West 89th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues, is seventy-five feet wide, extends 95 feet back into the block, and is fifty-four feet high. The facade of beige Roman brick, limestone, and terra cotta is articulated with a central five-bay arcade, flanked by two-bay end pavilions. At the ground story, rising above a basement, are three large round-arched openings which indicate the functions of the interior. The outer arched openings, formed of narrow brick voussoirs with narrow limestone keystones, are outlined by simple brick moldings. Engaged Norman capitals serve as impost blocks, each decorated with carved acanthus leaves in low relief. The office entrance on the east contains wood-framed windows and a door, both painted red. The central arch is framed with a flat, keyed limestone surround with impost blocks that match those of the other entrances. The carved limestone keystone is decorated with the design of the type of horseshoe worn by carriage horses. The central horse traffic door is of wood, painted red, and glass. Alternating with the large arches are two pairs of arched windows each of which shares a central brick pier, impost block, and intersecting moldings. A limestone water table surmounts the small basement windows.

The second and third stories contain five central bays, flanked by paired windows in the end pavilions. All window openings have limestone sills and lintels; the second story lintel, in the central five bays, is continuous. The window type in the central bay is six-over-six double-hung wood sash. That in the end bay is four-over-four double-hung wood sash. (The end pavilion at the west contains a shaftway, and the window sash have been removed.) The fourth story of the central section contains round-arched windows above which are bands of rectangular brick fretwork at frieze

and parapet level. The word "Claremont" appears in terra-cotta panels inset into the lower band of fretwork. At attic level of the end pavilions are sets of three round-arched windows outlined by intersecting moldings. These end pavilions rise to gabled roofs while the rest of the roof is flat.

The original wrought-iron fence (painted red) fronts the ground story and has anthemion-trimmed cast-iron newel posts. Underneath the fence remains the original low wall composed of slabs of slate. The west facade is a visible brick wall with no window openings, as another building once abutted it, while on the east facade one still sees an early painted advertisement sign which now barely reads "Boarding and Livery."²³

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APPENDIX

Claremont Stables Tenant History

City Directories

1893-1894	Tallman's Claremont Stables
1894-1895	" " "
1895-1896	" " "
1896-1897	" " "
1897-1898	E.B. Seaman & Son
1898-1899	" " "
1899-1900	" " "
1901-1902	" " "
1902-1903	" " "
1903-1904	" " "
1904-1905	" " "
1905-1906	" " "
1906-1907	" " "
1907-1908	" " "
1908-1909	" " "
1909-1910	Mason-Seaman Transportation Co.
1910-1911	" " "
1911-1912	" " "
1912-1913	" " "
1913-1914	" " "
1914-1915	" " "
1915-1916	Bonavista Stable Co.
1916-1917	" " "
1917-1918	" " "
1919-1920	" " "
1921-1922	" " "
1923-1924	" " "
1925-1926	" " "
1926-1927	Claremont Riding Academy
1928-Present	" " "

NOTES

1. National Register of Historic Places, Inventory Nomination Form, Claremont Stables/Claremont Riding Academy, U.S. Department of the Interior, Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Services (Form prepared by Steven M. Bedford; Christopher S. Gray), 1979.
2. NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 1220, Lot 5. NB 566-92.
3. "Buildings Projected," Real Estate Record & Guide, 67 (May 21, 1892), 834.
4. "Complain of a Stable," New York Times, August 28, 1901, p. 2.
5. Atlas of the City of New York (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1902), plates 25, 26, and 36. Between West 64th Street and West 75th Streets there were fifty stables and between West 75th and West 86th Streets there were thirty-one; on West 76th and West 77th alone there were twenty-three. Between West 86th and West 97th Streets thirteen stables existed, including Claremont.
6. Ibid.
7. National Register, 8.
8. Christopher Gray, "An 1892 Survivor of Close Calls with Demolition," New York Times, April 24, 1988, p. 14.
9. Atlas of Manhattan Island (New York: I.A. Lefevre, 1895), vol. 4, plate 63.
10. James Trager, West of Fifth (New York, 1987), 71.
11. Trow's General Directory of the Boroughs of Manhattan and Bronx, (New York, 1891-1929).
12. E.S. Nadal, "The Future of the Horse," New York Times, Dec. 24, 1899, p. 23.
13. Robert A.M. Stern, et al., New York 1900 (New York, 1983), 57.
14. "The Noble Horse is Blamed," New York Times, April 20, 1908, p. 6.
15. Gray, 14. See also c. 1938-40 photograph in NYC, Dept. of Taxes, Photograph Collection, Municipal Archives, Surrogate's Court.
16. Gray.
17. Ibid.

18. "Irwin Novograd, 81, Longtime Stable Owner," New York Times, Sept. 28, 1988, p. D 35.
19. New York County. Office of the Register. Liber Deeds and Conveyances. [Liber 5325, page 276], and C. Gerald Fraser, "89th St. Stable Used by Park Riders May Be Nearing the End of Its Trail," New York Times. (Jan. 3, 1973), 41.
20. At the time of designation renovation work was in progress, including a rooftop addition.
21. This information is based on the following: Interview with Mr. Paul Novograd at Claremont on June 18, 1990; T.E. Coleman, Stable Sanitation and Construction (New York, 1897), p. 101 and 102, "Portland cement concrete, when properly executed, forms an excellent material for stable paving...the surface should be formed with a series of grooves, so as to afford a good foothold for the horses, and to assist in the more complete and ready removal of...waste liquids from the floor of the stable."; and Gray, 14. The interior spaces are not part of this designation.
22. Information on Rooke has been compiled in the Research files, Landmarks Preservation Commission.
23. Various alterations have occurred over time. A penthouse, measuring 75 feet x 30 feet was erected in 1901 (ALT 1467-01). It no longer exists. An electric sign was added in 1932 (ES 1199-32). It has since been replaced by a wooden one. An iron fire escape was added on the bay east of the center in 1943 (BN 1444-43).

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Claremont Stables (now Claremont Riding Academy) has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as a part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Claremont Stables, built in 1892, was designed by Frank A. Rooke in the then popular Romanesque Revival style; that this structure is distinguished by such characteristic features as five arched bays at the ground story with the large central bay for horse traffic, arched window openings at the upper stories, and bands of fretwork encompassing the word "Claremont" which surmounts the whole; that the orderly arrangement of the facade, symmetrical and dignified in appearance, subtly expresses the functions within, while relating this utilitarian structure to the surrounding residential neighborhood; that the Claremont Stables, the oldest functioning commercial stable in Manhattan, is a rare survivor of a once common building type; and that constructed at a time when horses still provided the primary means of transportation, the stable has withstood the domination of automobile transportation and potential demolition through adaptation as a riding academy in 1927, providing facilities for boarding and renting horses and recreation in nearby Central Park.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21), 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 Claremont Stables (now Claremont Riding Academy), 173-177 West 89th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1220, Lot 5, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
173-177 West 89th Street
Historical Photograph, c. 1938-40
View of Facade

Architect: Frank A. Rooke
Photo Credit: Municipal Archives
City of New York, Dept. of Taxes
Collection



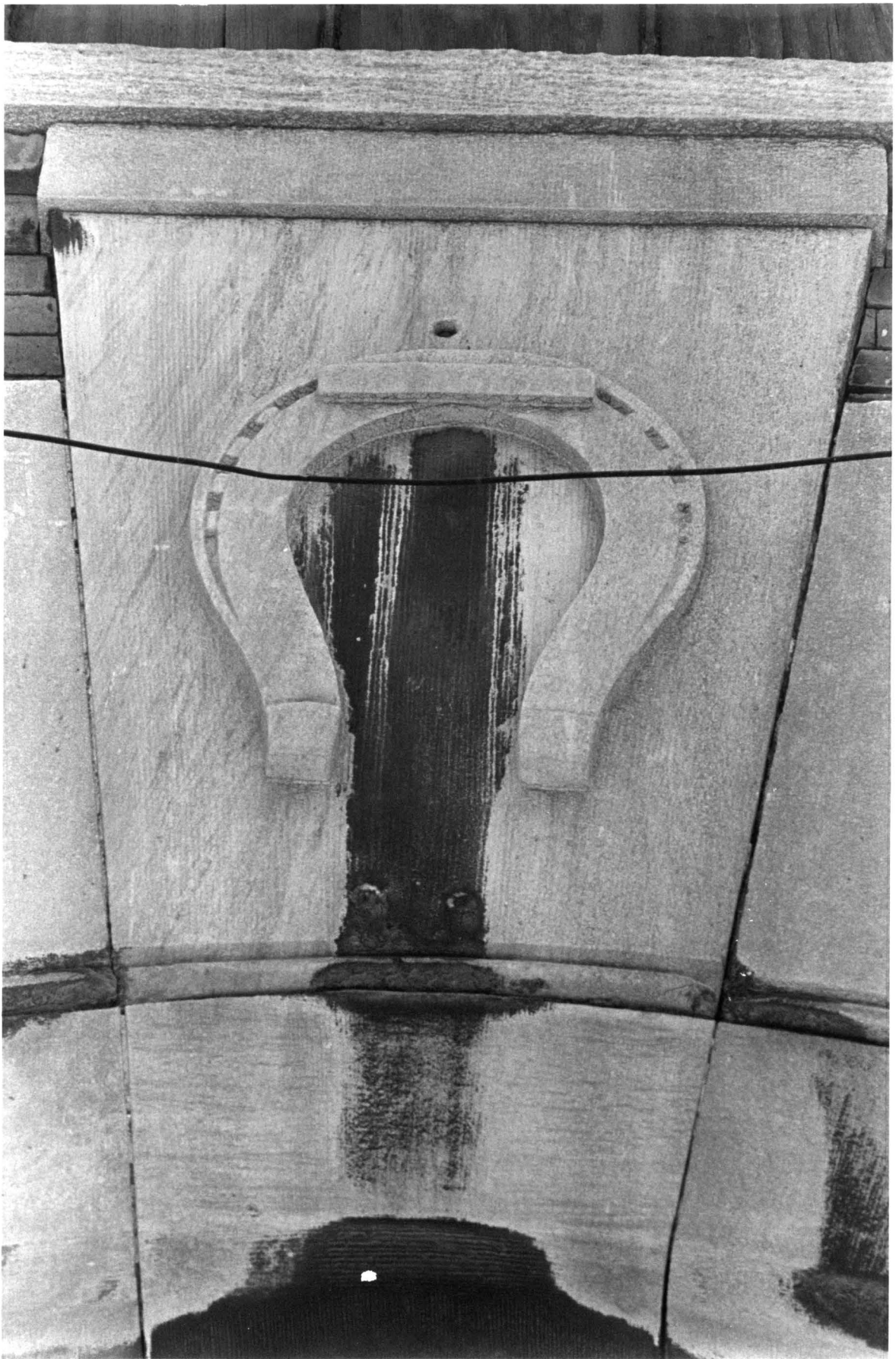
Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
173-177 West 89th Street
View of Facade

Architect: Frank A. Rooke
Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



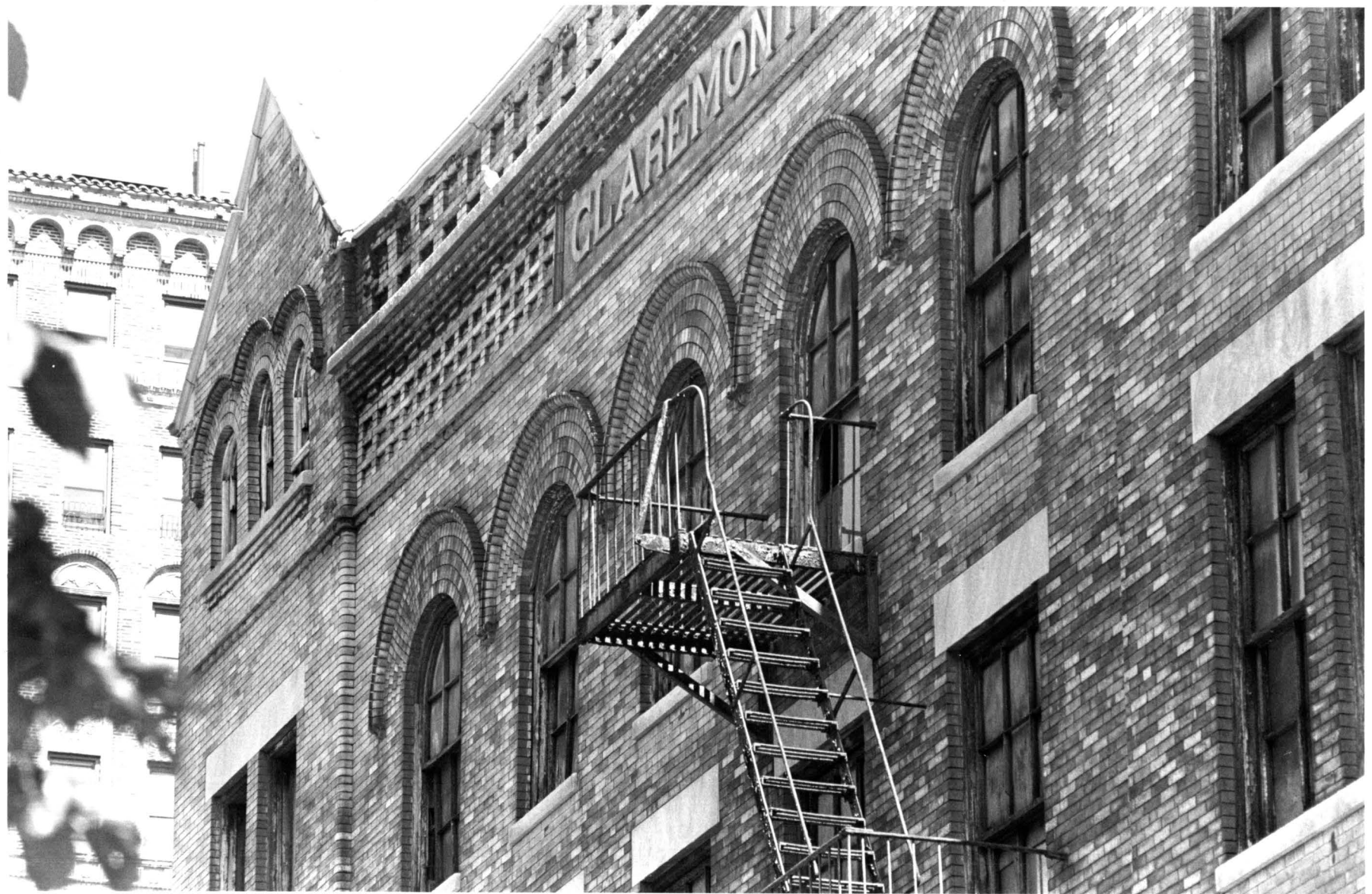
Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
View of Entrance

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
Detail of Keystone

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



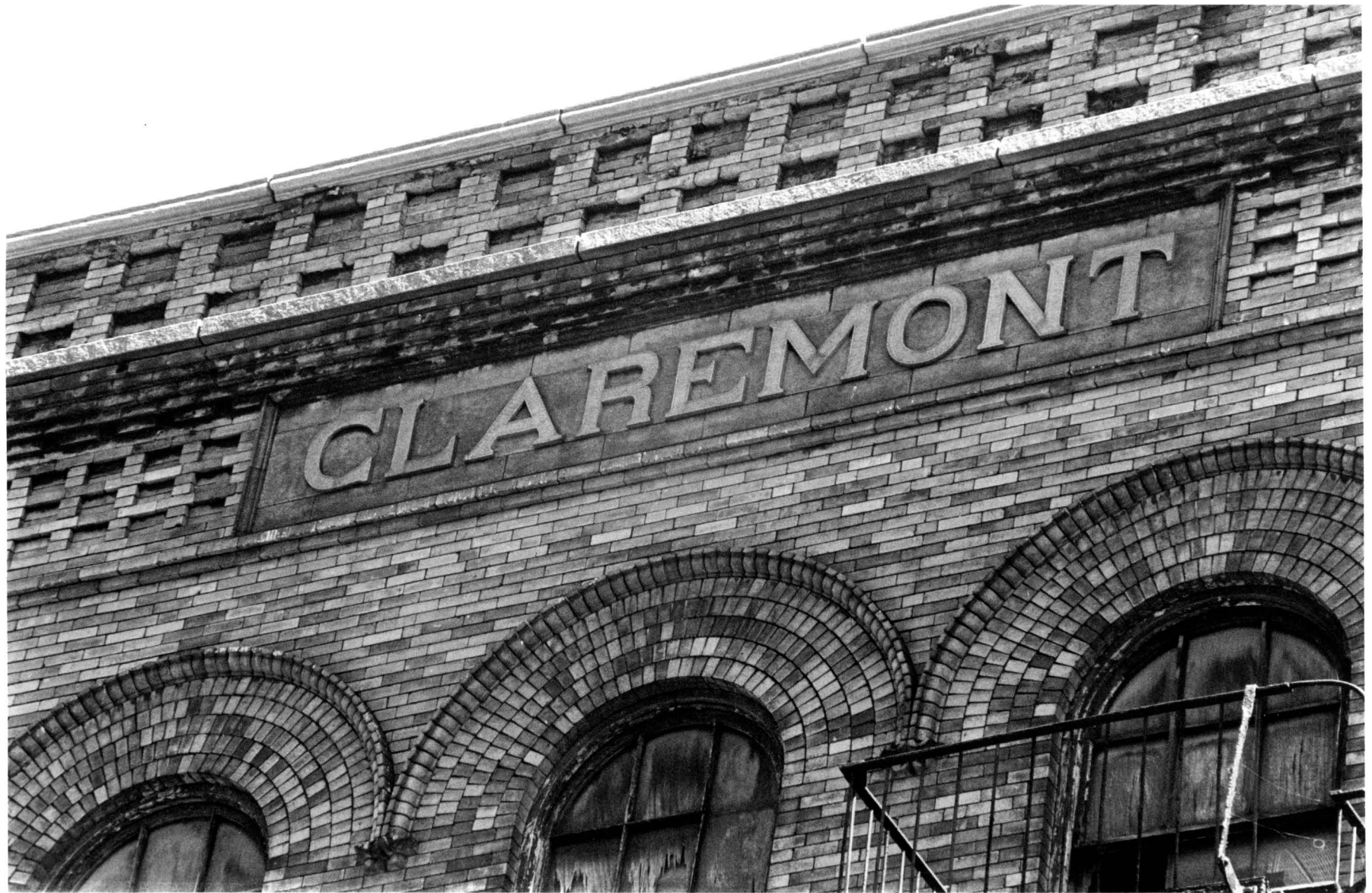
Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
Detail of Upper Stories

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
Detail of Windows

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Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
Detail of Cornice

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
Detail of Ground Story

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



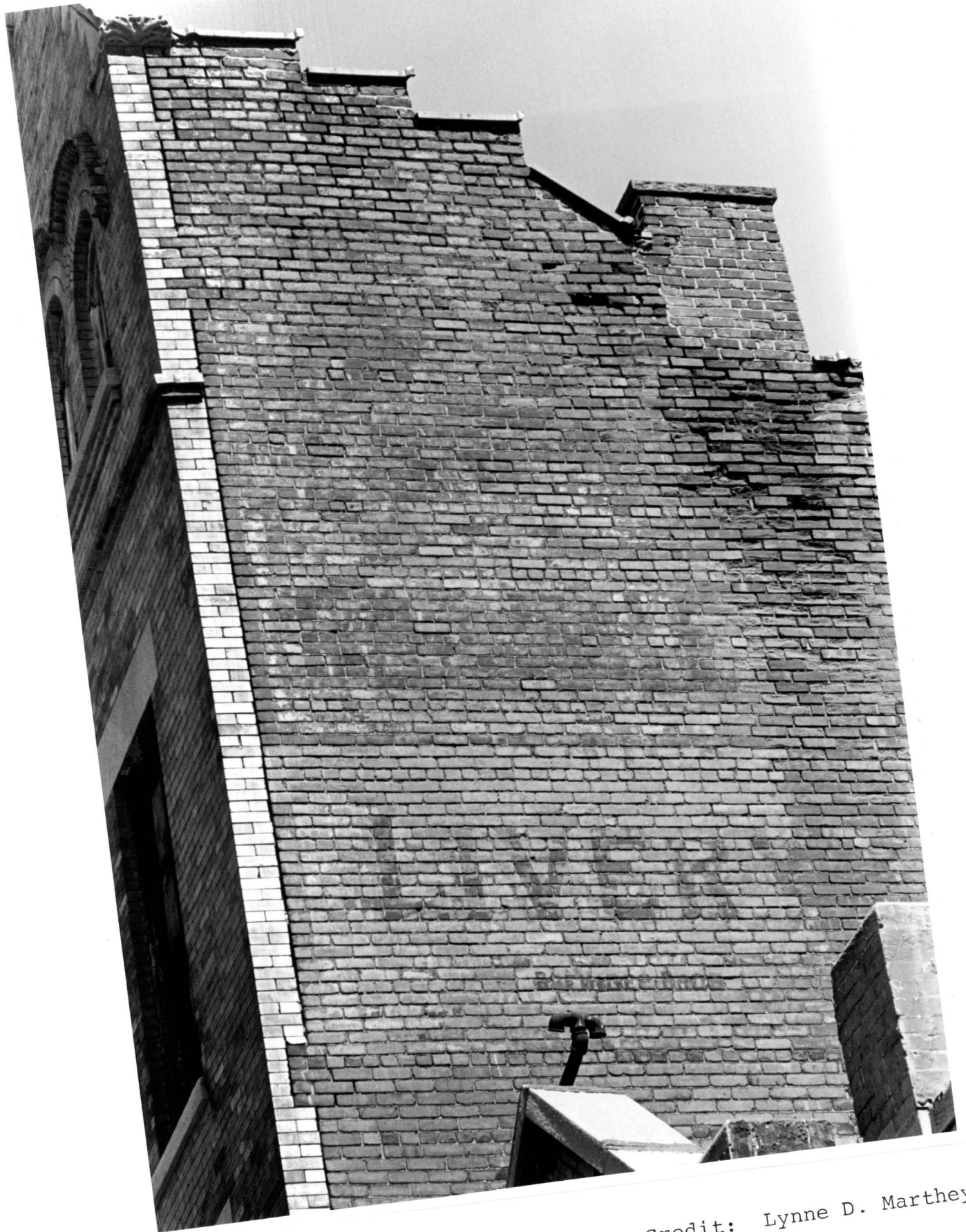
Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
Detail of an Impost Block

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
Detail of iron fence

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
View of Sign on East Wall

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



Claremont Stables
(now Claremont Riding Academy)
View of Entrance

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey