



Testimony of the Municipal Art Society  
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission  
By Benika Morokuma, Municipal Art Society  
American Bank Note Company Printing Plant, Borough of the Bronx  
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The Municipal Art Society is a private, non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote a more livable city. Since 1893, the Society has worked to advocate excellence in urban design and planning, contemporary architecture, historic preservation and public art.

I am Benika Morokuma, speaking on behalf of the Municipal Art Society. We strongly support the designation of the American Bank Note Company Printing Plant building in the Bronx, an architecturally and historically significant piece of industrial architecture.

Located in the Hunt's Point section of the Bronx, the American Bank Note Company Printing Plant was built in 1911. It was designed by the architectural firm Kirby, Petit & Green, the same firm to design the company's neo-Classical headquarters in the financial district in Manhattan in 1908.

The American Bank Note Company was a major national security engraving firm, which was established in 1858, and manufactured currency and stamps, securities and other documents for the United States and foreign governments as well as for major companies. Due to the rapid growth of the company and the rising land values of Lower Manhattan, the company separated its administration and production functions resulting in the new printing plant in the Bronx while the headquarters remained in Manhattan. The *New York Times* described this factory as "a capitalist machine" at its peak in the early 1960's, producing five million pieces of paper each day, which included half the securities for the New York Stock Exchange.

The facade of the plant is a clear example of the expressive factory design of the New York City around the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, Robert A.M. Stern highlighted this building as an example of the major industrial buildings in the outer boroughs. The austere and huge horizontal massing of the main part of the printing facility and the Gothic tower, which emphasizes the symmetry of the main façade on Lafayette Avenue, create an arsenal-like appearance and contribute to create a sense of security that is closely associated with its line of business. Security concerns are reflected in other aspects of the design - although this factory has over 1,500 square feet of street frontage, the building once had only one entrance in order to streamline the control of the access to this special printing plant (according to a 1909 *New York Times* article). The large windows, which are framed by the arches and wide vertical piers, allow the plenty of sunlight into the building - essential to manufacturing facilities before the widespread use of electricity.

We fully support the designation of the American Bank Note Company Printing Plant and urge the Commission to act quickly to designate it as a New York City landmark.