

Richard Webber Harlem Packing House

Individual Landmark

207-215 East 119th Street

Designation Date: March 27, 2018



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Barrett Reiter (LPC), March 2018

The former Richard Webber Harlem Packing House is an historic meat market building in East Harlem, constructed in 1895 and originally part of a larger commercial slaughterhouse, meat packing, and retail complex. Designed by the architectural firm of Bartholomew & John P. Walther for the prominent butcher Richard Webber, this Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival style building is a fine example of late-19th-century architectural design and an intact reminder of East Harlem's commercial and industrial past.

Richard Webber, an English immigrant, started a small butcher shop in East Harlem in the late 1870s. The company was very successful, expanding into a large complex with a staff of 500. Webber maintained other businesses, and at the time of his death in 1908, he was described by the New York Times as "one of the largest butchers in this city if not in the United States."

Webber was a member of the New York Produce Exchange, the Poultry and Game Trade Association, and the American Meat Packers' Association, and maintained affiliations with several local meat trade societies. He was active in the community, serving on the Harlem

Board of Commerce, and as a trustee of the Harlem Savings Bank. He was also a pioneer educator, giving lectures at New York Teachers College for the opening of their domestic science department, and at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

Bartholomew and John Peter Walther designed the meat packing house, which was constructed in 1895. Active in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the architects specialized in warehouses, factories, and flats buildings, and designed a number of buildings in Upper Manhattan.

The formal design and high quality craftsmanship of the six-story, brick and stone Packing House presented a sophisticated public face for Webber's operations. The facade combines features of the Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival styles. The tripartite facade composition, simplicity of lines, the decorative roundels, and repetitive design motifs, and particularly the projecting cornice with its paneled frieze, denticulation and modillions, speak to the Renaissance Revival style influences. Characteristic Romanesque Revival style facade elements include the triforium piers, and Roman arches with Byzantine and Corinthian capitals, which are repeated at the arcaded windows at the top story. The central bay of the facade includes the building's date, 1895, in carved stone, and prominently features terra-cotta cow head reliefs symbolizing the building's original function.

The complex remained in use by Webber's meat packing company until 1928, after which the building served a variety of functions. This building retains a high degree of historic integrity; limited alterations, including infilled windows and painted masonry at the base, do not diminish its strong architectural character or presence.

The well-crafted and well-constructed facade arrangement and articulation is expressive of its interior use, while its elaborate ornamentation elevates its importance within the streetscape and community.

[Read the full NYC LPC designation report here.](#)