



# Brooklyn Connections

## ARCHITECTURE IN BROOKLYN PROJECT PACKET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Adaptation*

Architecture has reflected New York City's rise as the country's **economic** and **cultural** capital. The city's architects have led the nation in **innovative** design and engineering techniques, making the city famous for its vertical skyline, among the first in the world.

Early New York City architecture was influenced by Dutch settlers. Seventeenth-century New Amsterdam adopted the style of its mother city, with narrow multistory buildings marked by stepped **gables** and low swooping roofs. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, **Georgian** and **Federal** row houses were in fashion.

Architects and builders favored **Greek Revival style** in the first of the nineteenth century. In the 1850s two technological advances originated in the city. The use of cast iron for mass-produced structural columns and ornamental façade elements aided in the creation of larger windows and decorations and sculptures. The introduction of the passenger elevator and steel allowed architects to design higher and higher buildings – today's skyscrapers.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century **Italianate style** was popular using elements from ancient Greece and Rome: columns, arches, and domes. **Art Deco** was introduced 1920s and 1930s. The style is often characterized by rich colors, bold geometric shapes and lavish ornamentation.

In the last decades of the twentieth century **postmodern** architecture became popular, with its softening of hard modernistic lines and use of eclectic and unusual forms and ornamentation.

**DOCUMENT 1:** Underhill, Irving. *Brooklyn Bridge and N.Y. Skyline*. 1925.  
Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:



1. The Brooklyn Bridge was designed by John Augustus Roebling and created with the assistance of his son, Washington Roebling, and daughter-in-law, Emily Roebling. It took fourteen years to build and was completed in 1883. At its completion, it was the longest **suspension bridge** in the world. Describe the Brooklyn Bridge as it is depicted in **DOCUMENT 1**.

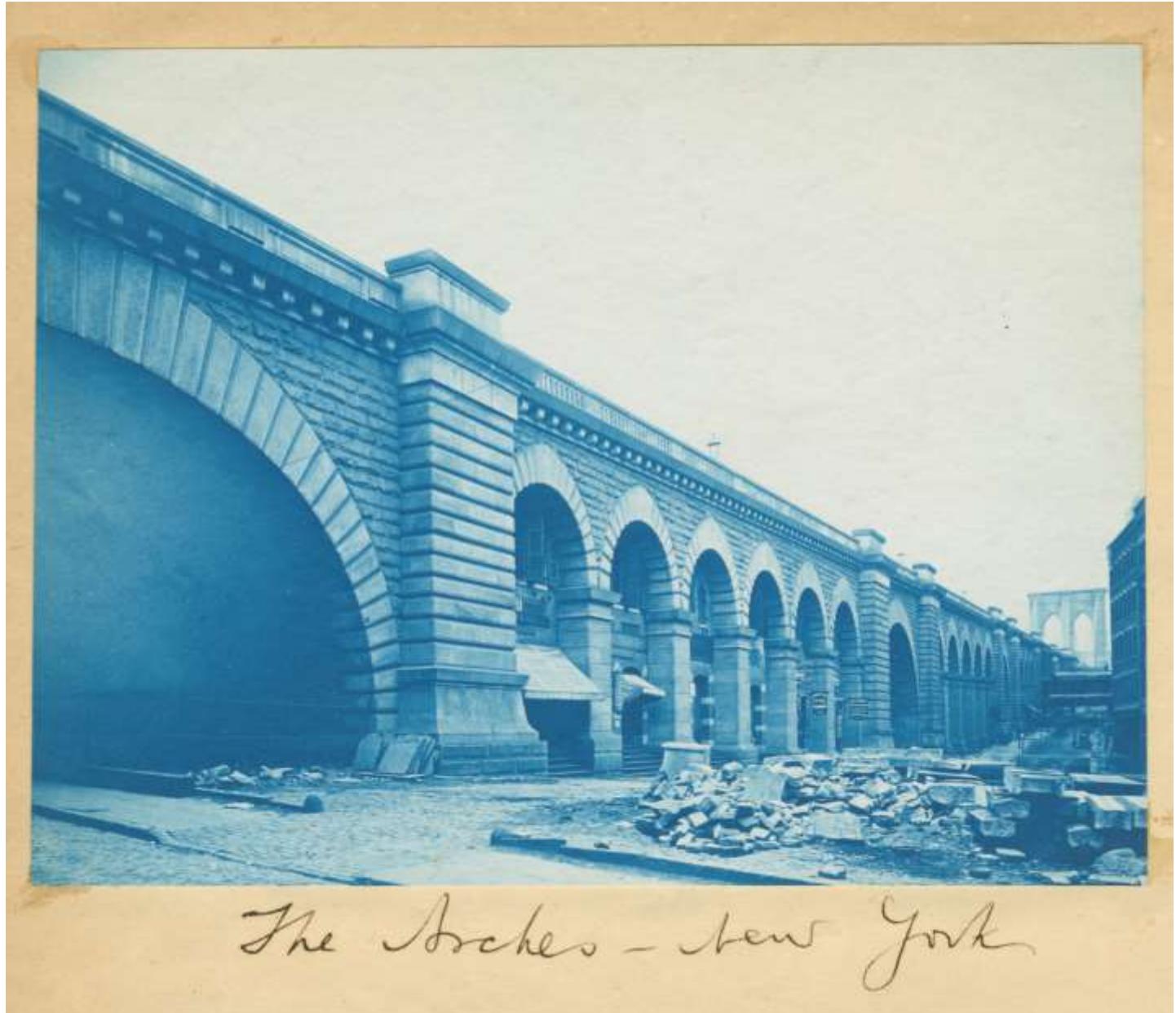
2. Circle the arches on the Brooklyn Bridge.

3. At the top of every arch is a **keystone**. This is the stone that prevents the arch from falling apart. They are often larger than the other stones and sometimes decorative. If you were decorating the Brooklyn Bridge, what design would you put on the arch keystones?

Keystone



**DOCUMENT 2:** Wilcox, Julius. *The Arches, New York*. 188-?. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

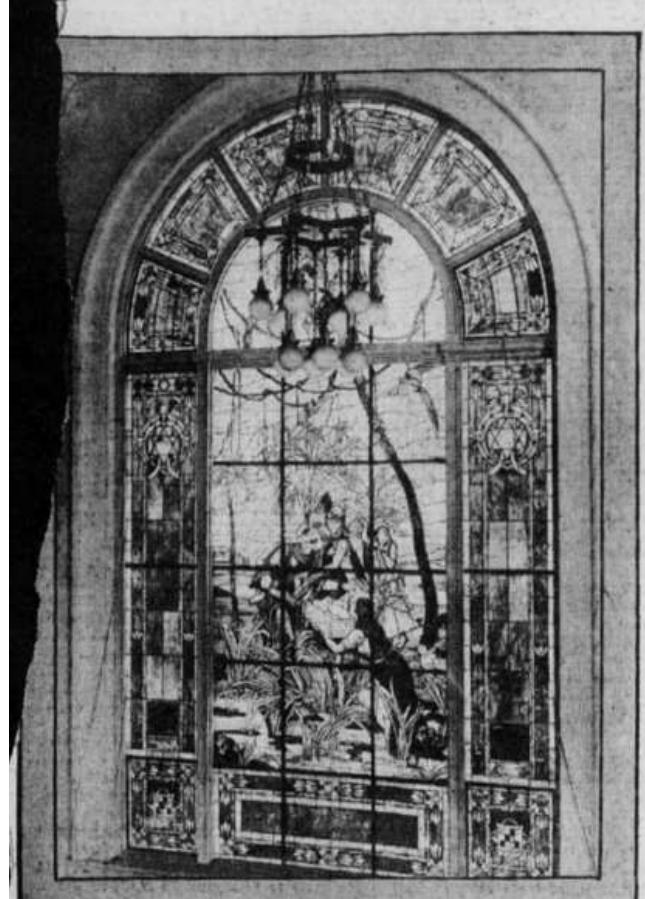
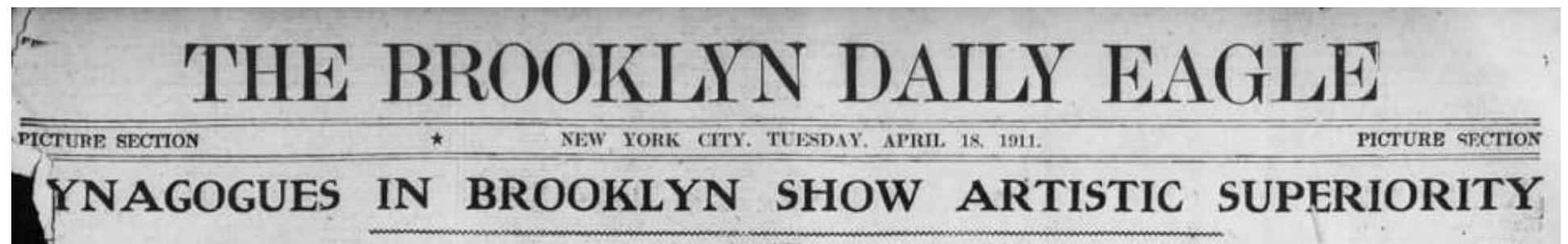


1. What is different about the arches in **DOCUMENT 2** from the arches in **DOCUMENT 1**?

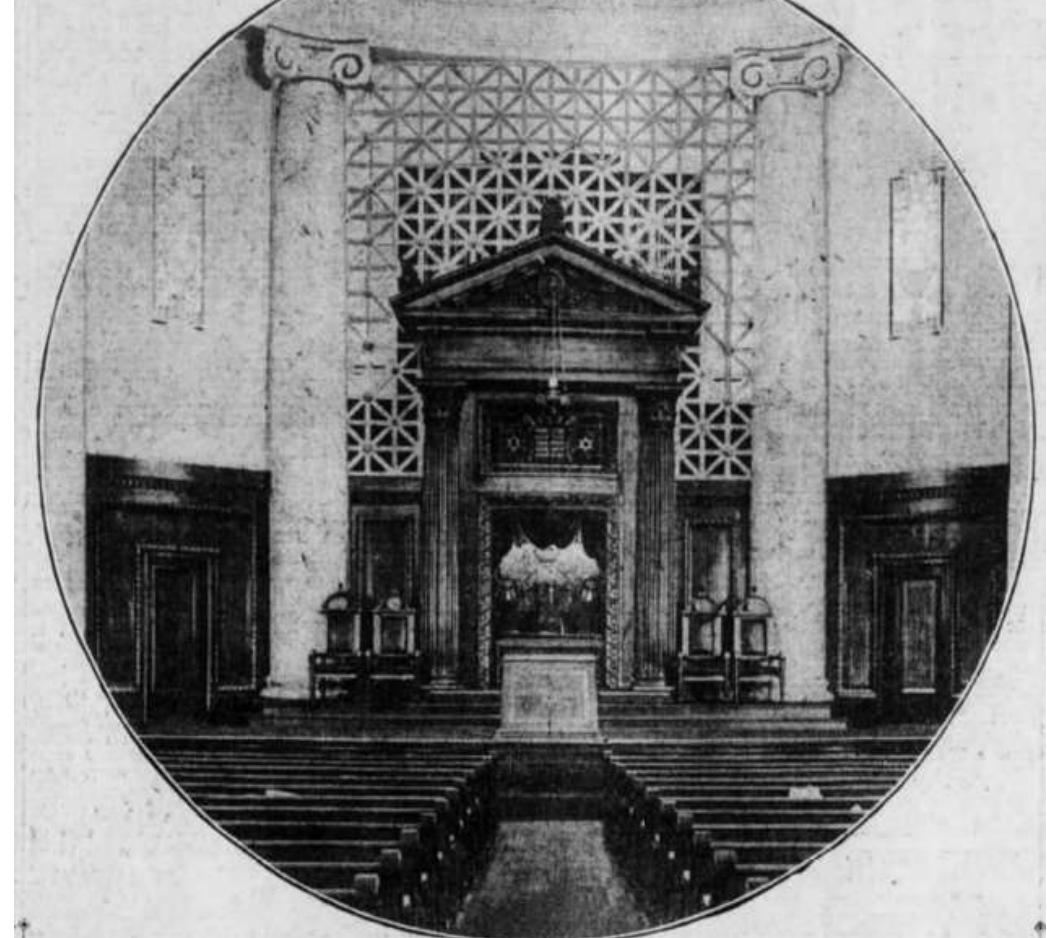
2. Describe what you see between the arches.

3. Do you think this is a good or bad place to put a store? Why do you say that?

**DOCUMENT 3:** "Synagogues in Brooklyn Show Artistic Superiority." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 18 April 1911. Print.



**Caption:** The artistic embellishments in the Hebrew religious buildings in Brooklyn match with the finest in the city. The above window is in Temple Beth Elohim and is in memory of Helene and Lipman Arensbetrg.

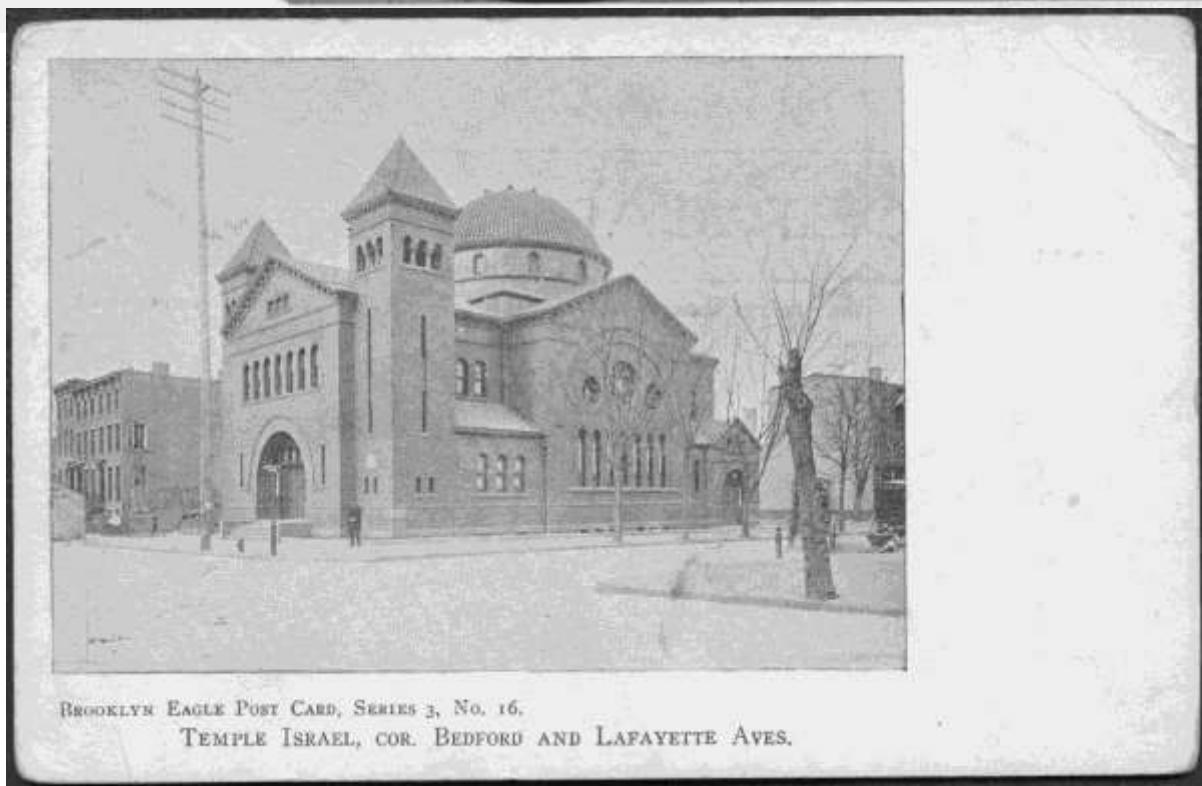


**Caption:** Temple Beth Elohim is richly decorated with all the symbolic furnishing of the Hebrew faith. The interior view of the temple gives a general view of the auditorium. In front is shown the pulpit, and, directly back of it are doors to the ark.

**DOCUMENT 4a:** Brooklyn Daily Eagle. Views of Temple Beth Elohim. 1951.

Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

**4b:** Brooklyn Eagle Post Card Series. *Temple Israel, cor. Bedford and Lafayette Aves.* 190-? Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library. Print.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**



1. Look at **DOCUMENTS 4a** and **4b**. How would you describe the decorations in the **synagogue**?

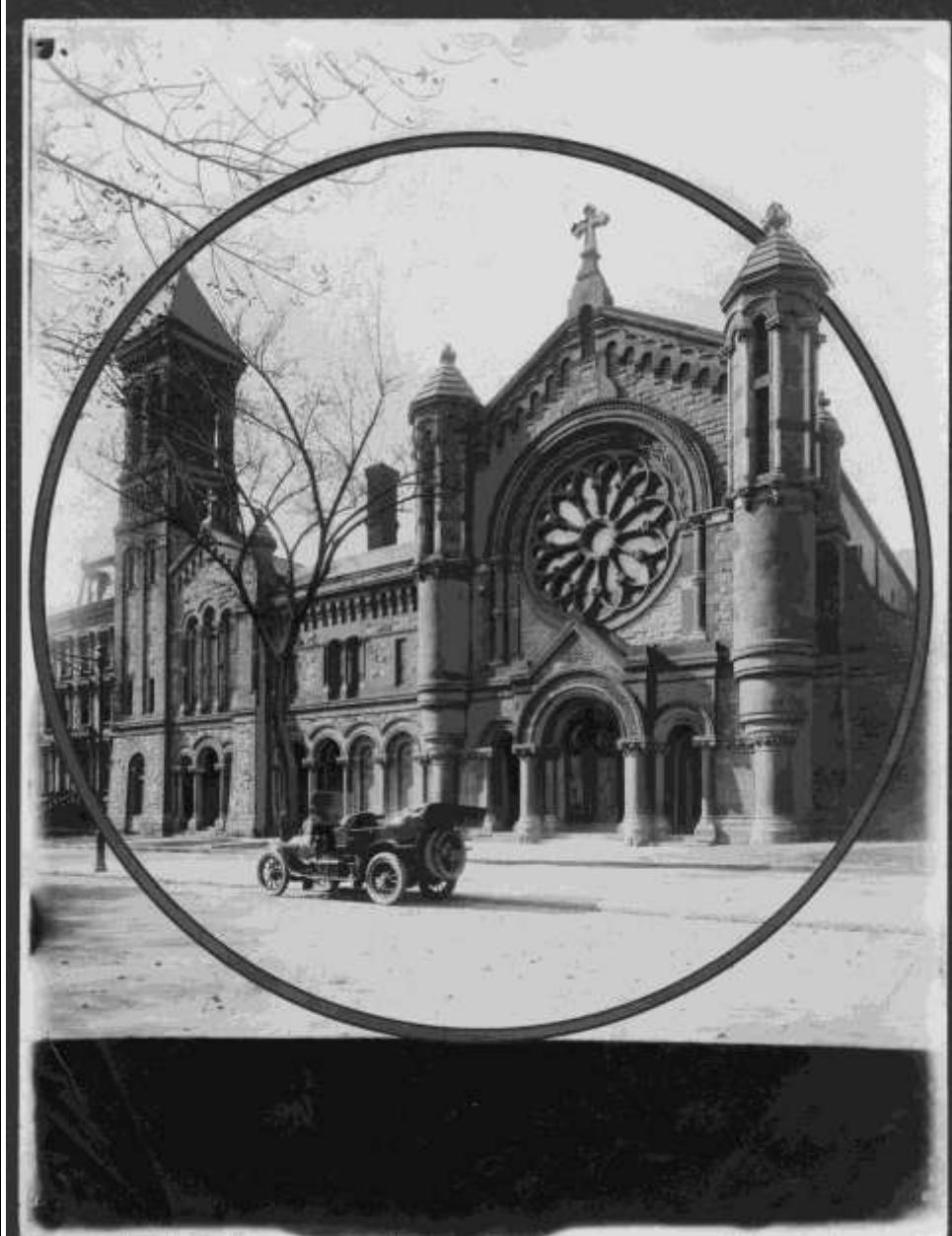
2. Why do you think people would want a synagogue to be ornately decorated?

3. Describe the building in **DOCUMENT 4a**.

4. Describe the building in **DOCUMENT 4b**.

5. Compare and contrast **DOCUMENTS 4a** with **4b**. What is the same? What is different?

**DOCUMENT 5a & 5b:** *Saint Luke's P.E. Church on Clinton Ave.* 1915. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**



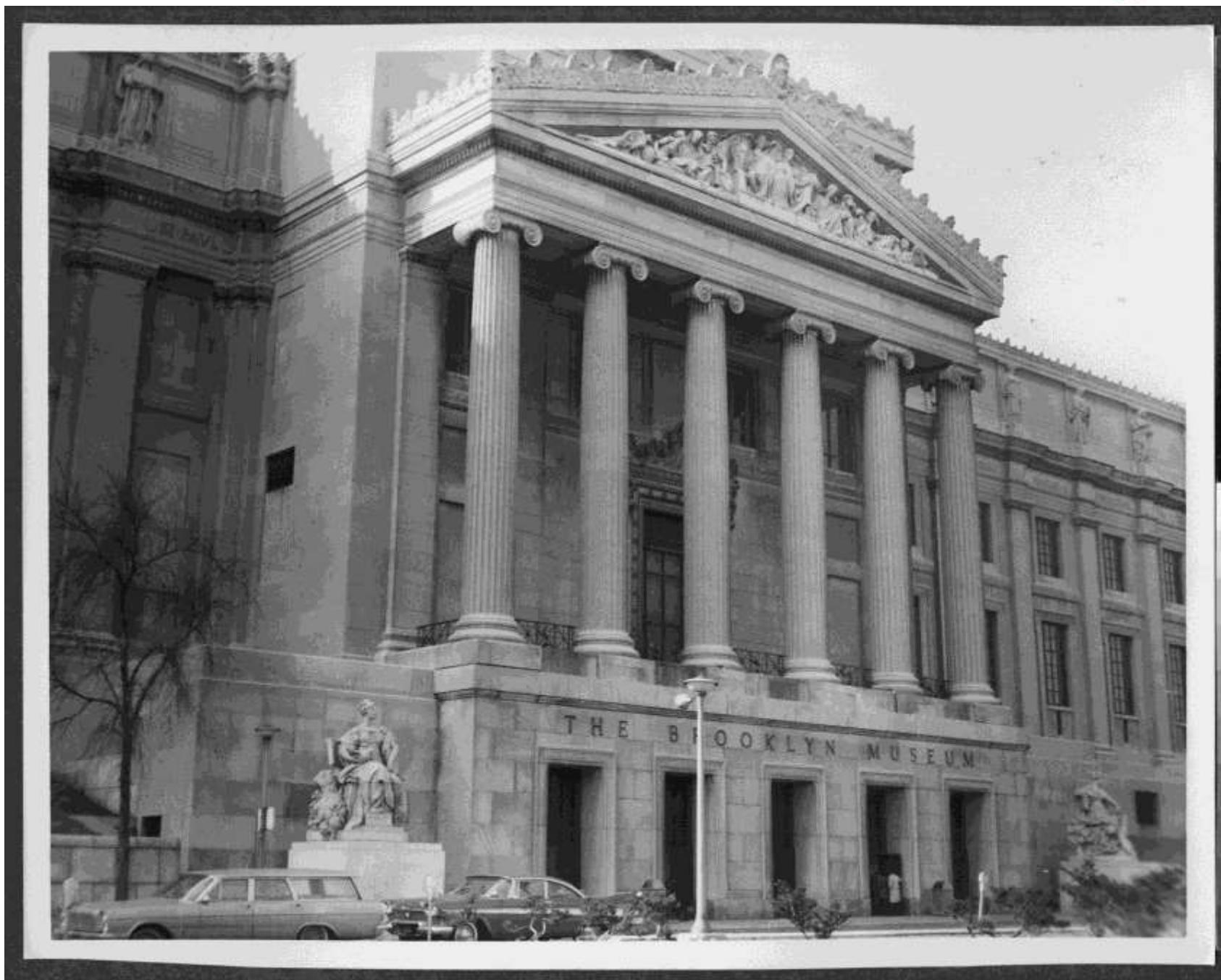
1. Describe the exterior of the church.

2. Describe the interior of the church.

3. How does the architecture of the church differ from the synagogues found in **DOCUMENTS 4a** and **4b**?

4. Think back to ancient temples from Greece, Rome, Egypt, etc. How do they compare to the synagogues and churches of Brooklyn in the early 1900s?

**DOCUMENT 6:** Herzberg, Irving. *Brooklyn Museum*. 1965. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:



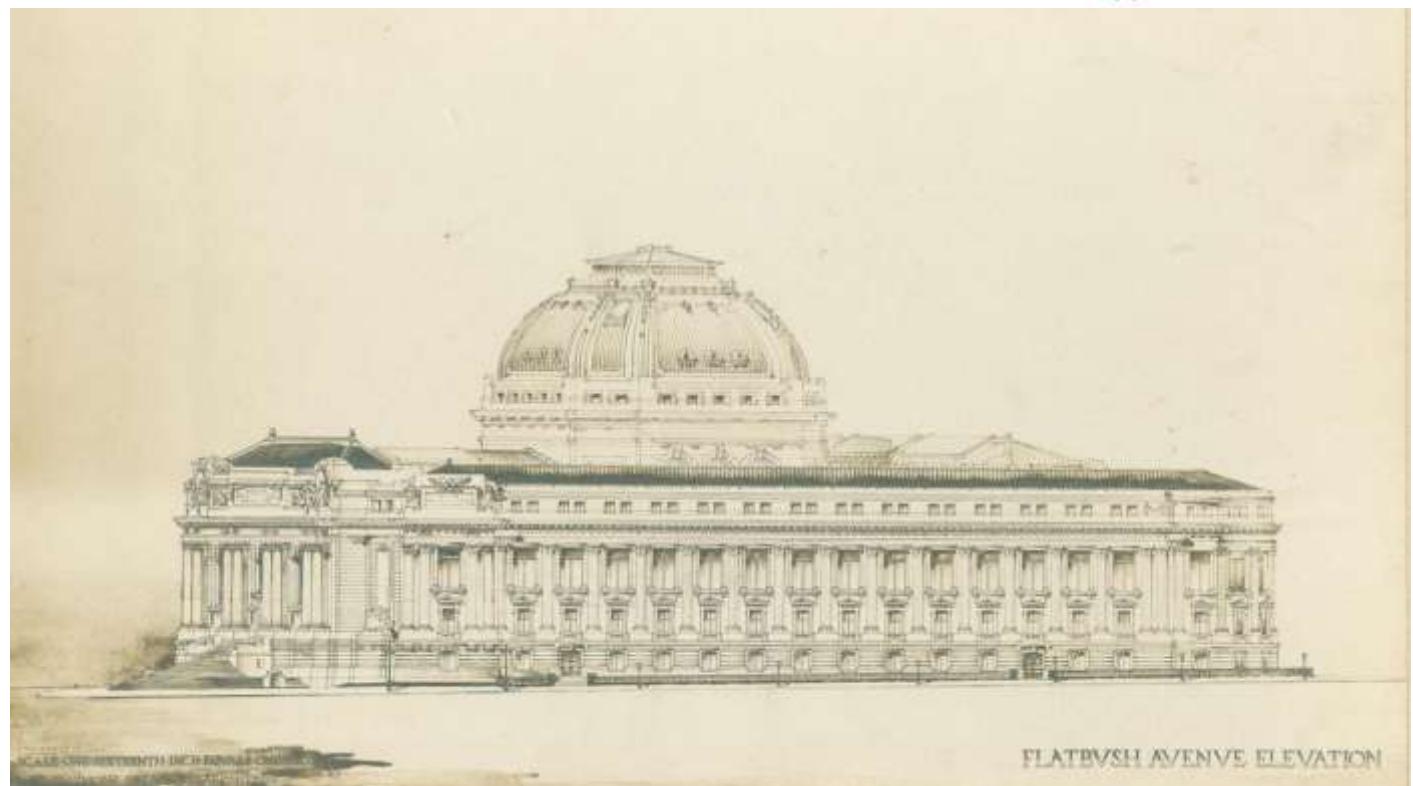
1. The Brooklyn Museum was built in 1895 and looks similar to many other large museums and libraries built around that time. Using information from **DOCUMENT 6**, what features might you also find on other turn-of-the-century building?

2. Think back to the ancient world. What does this building remind you of? Explain your answer.

3. At the top of the **columns** sits a **bas-relief**. What historic figures do you think might be sculpted over the doorway of the Brooklyn Museum?

4. There are three different types of columns. Ionic columns have curly-cues at the top. Doric columns have square boxes on top. Corinthian columns have incredibly decorative and festive tops. What type of columns does the Brooklyn Museum have? Support your answer with evidence from the photo.

**DOCUMENT 7a & 7b:** Brooklyn Public Library Renderings. 190-? Print.  
Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**



1. **DOCUMENTS 7a** and **7b** are **renderings** for the proposed Central Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library (this building was never built, as the plans for the Branch changed). Describe the building.

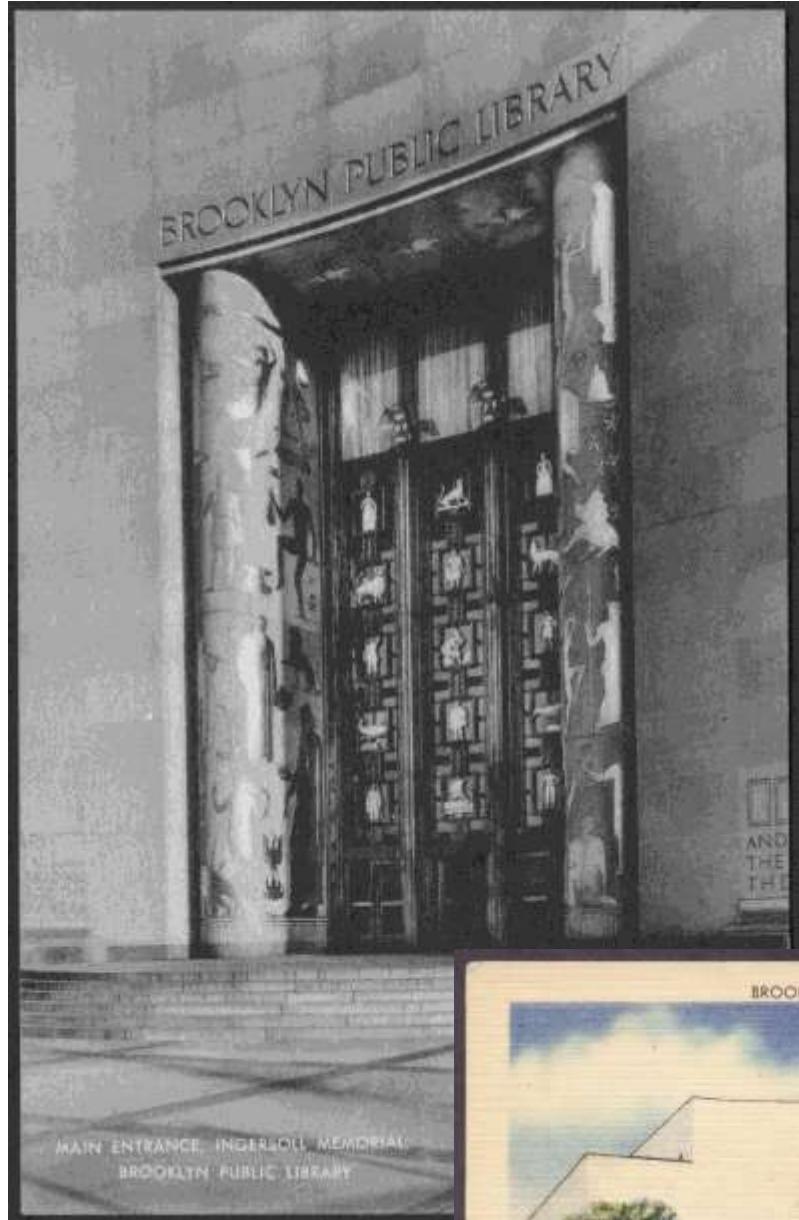
2. The building has a large **dome** on top. What other buildings have you explored in this packet that also have domes?

3. This building was supposed to be a library. Why do you think the builders wanted the library to be such a large and grand building? What does that say about the importance of libraries?

4. What elements of **DOCUMENTS 7a** and **7b** are similar to elements in **DOCUMENT 6**?

**DOCUMENT 8a:** Gottscho, Samuel. *Main entrance, Ingersoll Memorial Brooklyn Public Library*. 194-?. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

**8b:** "Color rendering of Central Branch of Brooklyn Public Library." 194-?. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**



1. The Brooklyn Public Library's Central Branch depicted in **DOCUMENTS 7a** and **7b** was never built. **DOCUMENTS 8a** and **8b** show the library's actual building. Using information from both documents, describe it.

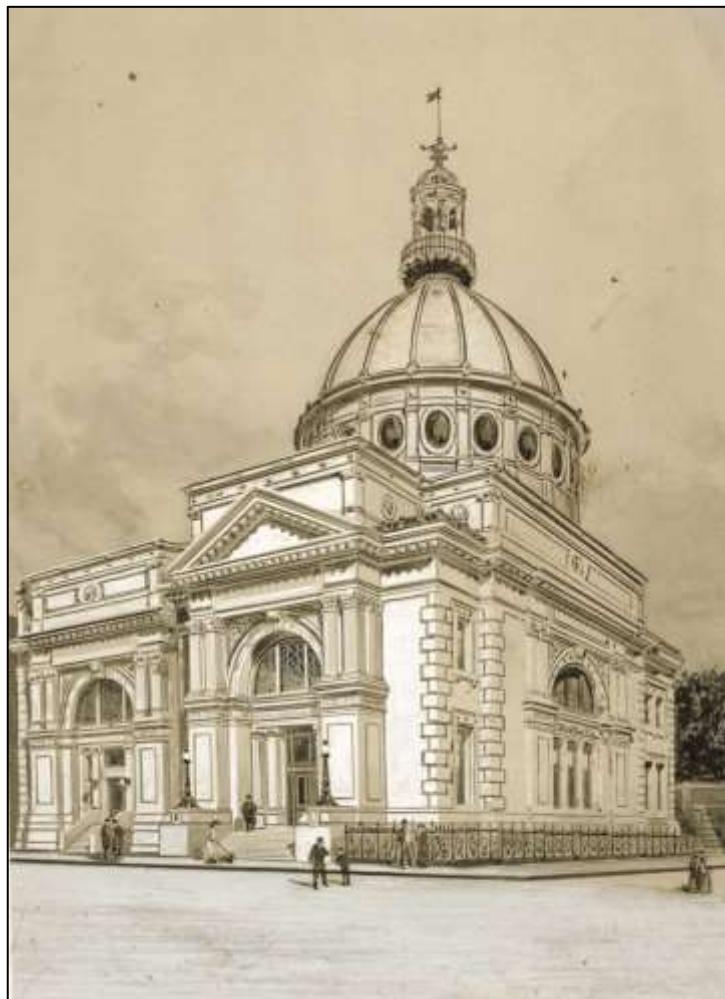
2. This building was finished in 1940. What is different about this building from the original plans, drawn in the early 1900s?

3. Describe the entrance to the building.

4. This building was built in the art deco style, which was popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Art deco buildings often include straight lines and strong shapes, as well as gold and silver decorations. Find evidence in the documents that proves this is an art deco building.

**DOCUMENT 9a:** *Williamsburg Savings Bank*. 1907. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

**9b:** *Williamsburg Bank Building*. 1938. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**



1. DOCUMENTS **9a** and **9b** are both branches of the Williamsburg Savings Bank, the first built in 1875 in the Italianate style, the second built in 1929. Which building is art deco? How do you know?

2. DOCUMENT 9a has arches, columns, and a dome. All of these are evidence of the Italianate style because they were also used in ancient Greek and Roman architecture. Do you like the art deco or the Italianate building better? Why?

3. Brooklyn has fancy banks, churches, synagogues, libraries, and museums. Why do you think these buildings were all built so large and decorative?

**DOCUMENT 10a:** "Brooklyn Heights Library Rendering." *New York Times* 2015. Print.



**DOCUMENT 10b:** "Domino Sugar Factory Rendering." *The Nation* 2014. Print.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**



1. Today, many architects design in a modern style, using straight lines and glass. Describe **DOCUMENT 10a**.

2. **DOCUMENT 10a** is a rendering for a new Brooklyn Public Library branch that will have apartments in the upper floors. Why might a building like this make a good library?

3. **DOCUMENT 10b** is a rendering for a apartment buildings in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Describe the buildings.

4. The building with the smokestack in **DOCUMENT 10b** used to be an old sugar factory. Developers are preserving the outside because it is a historic building, but many other buildings have been destroyed. Do you think we should destroy historic buildings to make way for new ones or try to save the old buildings as well? Why do you think that?

## GLOSSARY:



**Ark:** The place in a synagogue where the religious documents are kept

**Art Deco:** A popular design style of the 1920s and 1930s using bold outlines, geometric and zigzag forms, and the use of gold design

**Bas-relief:** a sculpture, carving, or molding in bas-relief

**Columns:** Tall cylindrical structures that often hold up a building

**Cultural:** A culture is a way of life of a group of people--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols

**Dome:** A rounded structure on a roof

**Economy:** Relating to money and trade

**Embellishment:** A decorative detail or feature added to something to make it more attractive

**Federal (Style):** A style used in North America circa 1780 and 1830, buildings often symmetrical, squarer, flatter, not decorative

**Gable:** A peaked roof

**Georgian (Style):** A style used in North America before the 1780s, buildings often symmetrical, square, with peaked roofs

**Greek Revival Style:** A style used circa 1860 to 1920 in which aspects of ancient Greece were used

**Italianate Style:** A style used in the 1800s in which aspects of Italian architecture were used

**Keystone:** A central stone at the summit of an arch, locking the whole together

**Postmodern:** Coming later than that which is modern

**Pulpit:** A raised platform from which the preacher delivers a sermon

**Rendering:** A performance of a piece of music or drama

**Suspension Bridge:** A bridge held together by strong cables

**Synagogue:** A Jewish house of worship