

# 1906 Building, Once an Athletic Club, Now a School

St. Ann's, a million renovation the facade.

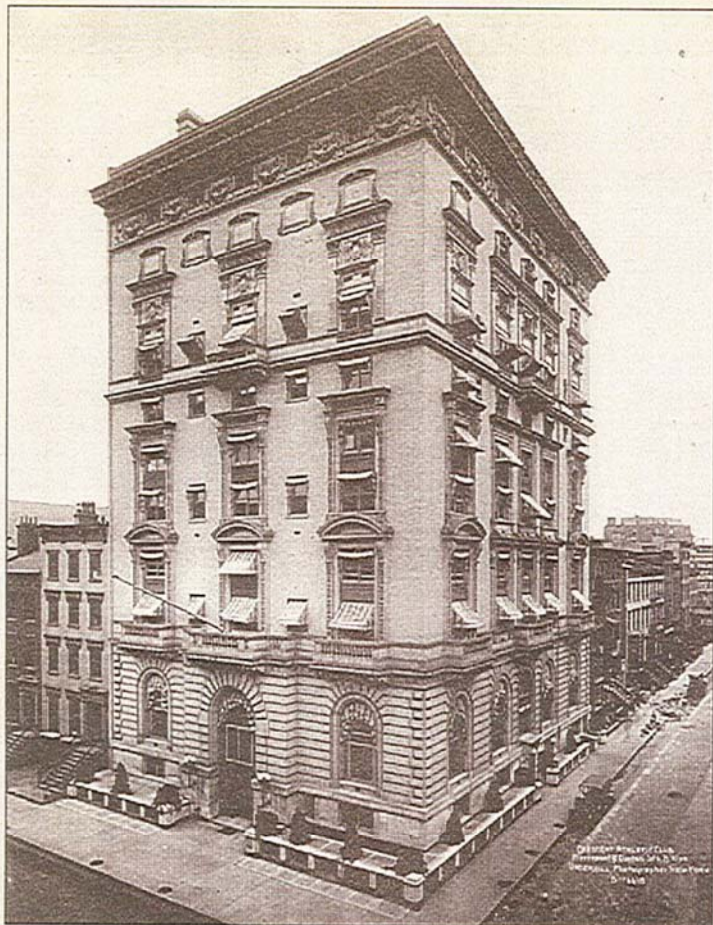
By CHRISTOPHER GRAY

**W**HAT was once one of Brooklyn's most important clubs is now St. Ann's School, founded in 1965 at 129 Pierrepont Street with unconventional goals described in its brochure as "an amusement park" in which the amusements include Aristophanes, Darwin and Baudelaire. The school is in the middle of a \$10 million facade renovation for the building, which was completed in Brooklyn Heights in 1998 for the Crescent Athletic Club.

In the late 19th century, Brooklyn was a city, not a borough, and it had a growing tradition of civic, cultural and political organizations. The Crescent Athletic Club was organized in 1884 to play football in Prospect Park, and soon became a social and athletic organization. Such was the rapid growth of Brooklyn that within 10 years the club had a giant complex in Bay Ridge — including a boathouse and a shingled country estate — along with a downtown building at 25 Pierrepont Street.

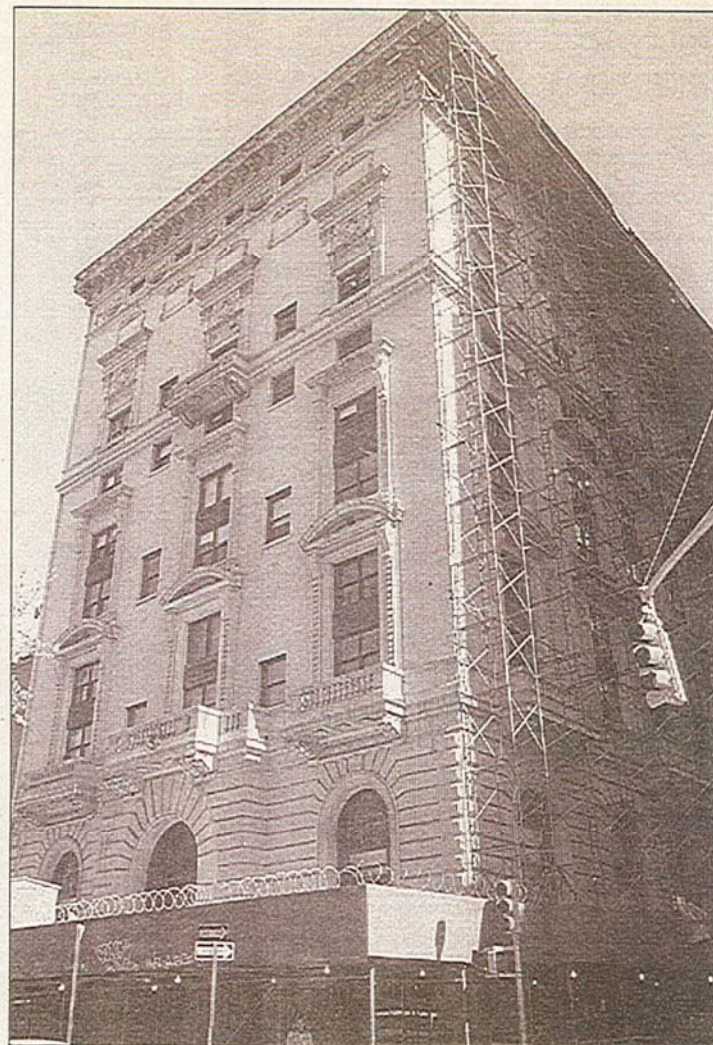
Brooklyn became part of New York City in 1898, and the club kept expanding. In 1902 the New York Tribune reported that the club, with membership limited to 1,500 and a dues of \$50 a year, was going to build a new house.

The new building, designed by Frank Freeman, went up at Pierrepont and Clinton Streets across from the Long Island Historical Society (now the Brooklyn Historical Society). Freeman had done exquisite work in the 1890's in the Romanesque Revival style — his designs included the former Warehouse on Old Fulton Street near Brooklyn Bridge — but by 1906 the rich uses of dark brick that marked his high style were out of fashion. For the new structure, Freeman adapted



Brooklyn Public Library

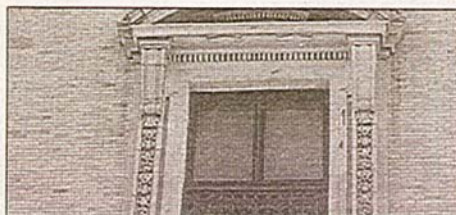
Crescent Athletic Club, above in a 1910 photo, was built in 1906. The building, right and below, is now St. Ann's School. It is undergoing a facade renovation.



Photographs by Rebecca Cooney for The New York Times

second floor, a double-height oak-paneled dining room on the third floor, a gym on the top floor, and sleeping rooms, squash and handball courts, a library, and billiard and other rooms on other levels.

An article in Architects' & Builders' Magazine in 1907 praised Freeman's handling of the architectural detail but took issue with his use of dark brick.



opened, Bull circulated a stern letter complaining about steady thefts of club silverware, hairbrushes and other items emblazoned with the club's crescent-moon symbol. He called it larceny and threatened more serious action if the thefts did not stop.

Bull's son, Charles M. Bull Jr., was a frequent club champion in singles tennis,

when the club occupied the one-acre site in Prospect Park, polo, cricket, tennis and baseball, vary as to what was on the property, which was on Pierrepont Street and Washington Street.

The club closed in 1936, the same year the Bank forced the school to vacate the property. In 1965, the school itself filed for bankruptcy and vacated its campus in 1966.

The building was used for stores — the school vacated out of 1966 the nearby building. The school bought the site in 1966 and expanded through the building. The artwork now hangs on the walls.

St. Ann's School is named for the children, and has a sense of history and a sense of a school's continuity. The school's catalog is new, something for the children.

**I**N addition to the subjects, the school teaches these, the dominant DNA of the T. The Enemies of the club are given. The disguised, confidential commitment.

Although the building is stripped, several rooms survive in the main hall, with linoleum floors. The room by the Ramble (the hall and the room) are dark.

The school is named for the school's Bosworth