THE
RESTORATION
OF BOROUGH HALL'S
WPA
MURALS
& SCULPTURES

SPONSORED BY THE
**OFFICE OF THE STATEN ISLAND
BOROUGH PRESIDENT**

Guide to the Lobby

PAINTINGS

1 Giovanni da Verrazano Discovers Staten Island, 1524
Sailing for the King of France in search of a route to the East Indies, Verrazano sees what is now Staten Island as he enters New York Harbor on April 17, 1524.

2 Henry Hudson Anchors off "Staaten Eylandt", 1609
On September 2, 1609, the Englishman Henry Hudson sails into the Harbor under the Dutch flag. A mate of Hudson's writes about the land "...pleasant with grass and flowers and goodly trees..." Native Americans look on with conflicting emotions. According to legend, this building is located where Hudson came ashore.

3 Cornelius Melyn Trades with the Indians
A major portion of Staten Island is granted to Melyn in 1641 by the Dutch West India Company. Between 1641 and 1655, colonies are continuously destroyed by Native Americans in conflict over the policies of the Dutch Governor General.

4 Huguenot Settlement on Staten Island
Under the leadership of the Belgian Walloon Pierre Billiou, the first permanent European settlement is established in August 1661. The French Huguenots are part of the original settlers.

5 The British Fortify Fort Hill, 1776
Under General William Howe, 32,000 British troops land on Staten Island in July, 1776 and proceed to fortify key locations. Fort Hill overlooked New York Harbor. The troops find themselves amongst friends as the island is strongly loyal to King George III.

6 Conference at Billopp House, Tottenville, 1776
On September 11, 1776, the British meet for the first and only time with representatives from the Continental Congress; Edward Rutledge, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams. The British attempt to bring about a negotiated peace to the Revolutionary War. Negotiations fail and the war continues.

7 Fight at St. Andrew's Church, 1776
St. Andrew's Church was a gift from Queen Anne to the American colonies. It is used during the American Revolution as barracks by the British troops. This mural portrays the second of two skirmishes at this site. The dying soldier is a unique image in this narrative series and is a moving citation from art history.

8 British Troops Evacuate Staten Island: December 5, 1783
After the surrender of the British at Yorktown in 1781, it takes another two years and the 1783 Treaty of Paris before the British finally leave their former colonies.

9 Governor Tompkins Erects Forts Richmond and Tompkins, 1812-1814
With the threat of impending war in 1812, New York's Governor Tompkins fortifies the inadequately protected Narrows of New York Harbor.

10 Stage Coach to Richmond Stops at Black Horse Tavern
Located in New Dorp, this mural portrays the 17th century tavern as it might have been in the early 1800s. It was demolished in 1934 to widen Richmond Road. The signboard at the upper left is preserved at the Staten Island Historical Society Museum in Historic Richmond Town.

11 Castleton Hotel Fire at New Brighton
The volunteer fire department is shown fighting the blaze in the Castleton Hotel in 1907. Rebuilt and renamed in 1899, the fashionable hotel can accommodate 300 guests. While the waiter staff is largely comprised of black men from the South, the captain of the hotel is a black Staten Islander, Charles Glascoe.

12 First Railroad: Clifton to Tottenville, 1860
June 2, 1860 marked the new era in Staten Island transportation: the advent of the first steam railroad, an enterprise of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt and his associates. The wood-burning locomotive pulled passenger cars from Vanderbilt's Landing (Clifton) to Tottenville. Five trips a day are made during the week, and three on Sunday.

13 Bayonne Bridge Under Construction, 1928-1931
After three years, one month and 28 days of construction, the $13 million Bayonne Bridge connecting Staten Island to Bayonne, New Jersey, opens on November 15, 1931. Declared "The most beautiful structure of steel of 1931" by the American Institute of Steel Construction, it is presently the second longest steel arch bridge in the world (the longest is the New River Gorge Bridge, New Fayetteville, West Virginia, built in 1977).

U.S. PRESIDENTS IN BAS-RELIEF

L Abraham Lincoln

W George Washington

J Thomas Jefferson
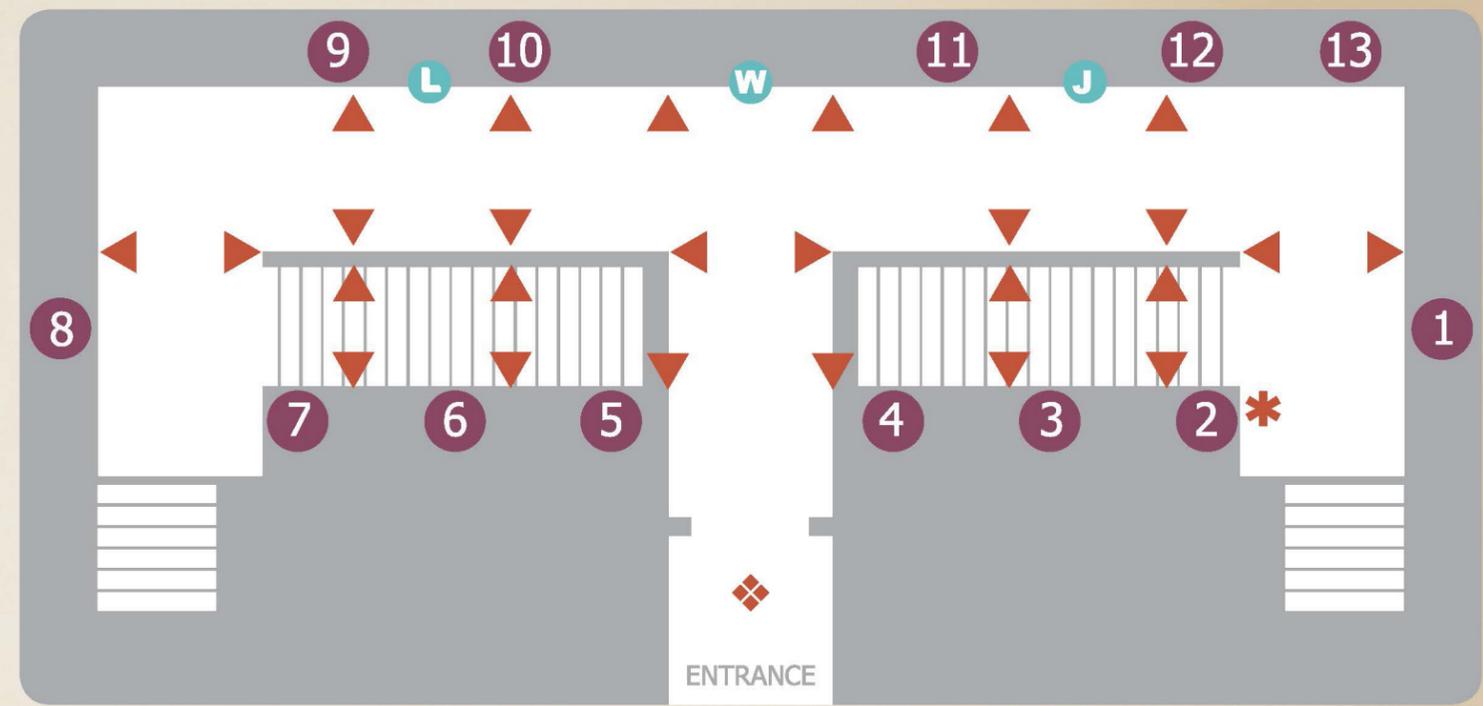
▲ BAS-RELIEF SCULPTURES

Large bas-relief sculptures, on the upper portions of the walls throughout the Main Floor, were once covered with up to seven coats of paint. First cast in plaster in the sculptor's studio, they were then cemented into the triangular spaces between the hallway's arches. Completed over a period of more than 10 years, they include classical images (Hermes, Artemis) and modern personifications such as Astronomy, Engineering, Science, Labor, Education, Art, Music, Protection and Law. Until this restoration, none of the sculptures were individually illuminated.

BAS-RELIEF MEDALLIONS

Forty-four bas-relief medallions, located in the upper corners of each of the Main Floor's six architecturally defined bays, were also first coast in plaster in the studio and then cemented into their present locations. There are 10 images used: a Medusa head; an eagle shown in full profile; the American eagle symbol; a profile of a Roman soldier; a profile of a Roman statesman; a profile of a Greek youth (Apollo?); a profile of a Greek maiden (Athena?); heraldry; a medallion comprised of maritime motifs; and a medallion comprised of industry motifs. Until now, not one of the medallions as individually illuminated.

✳ GOLD LEAF MOLDING

During the restoration work, it was discovered that all of the architectural ceiling molding was originally covered in 24k gold-leaf. Unfortunately, as per pictures from c.1940, it appears that some time between the completion of the building (1906) and the installation of the murals (1940), the ceiling and all gold-leaf moldings were already painted over. To restore the molding was prohibitively expensive. Fortunately, a small section of the overlying paint on this section of molding easily delaminated, revealing the gold leafing underneath, This very small section pays homage to the original atmosphere of the Main Floor.

❖ ORIGINAL DRUM LIGHT FIXTURE

The only remaining original interior fixture from 1906, it has been restored to its graceful splendor after more than 90 years of neglect. Small arms inside the frosted glass drum are original gas jets that one lit up the fixture.

ENTRANCE

Staten Island Borough Hall

Designed by architects Carrere & Hastings in 1903, the building was completed in 1906. John Carrere, who lived on Staten Island, and his partner also designed the new Staten Island ferry terminal (1904), the County Courthouse (1913-1919), and several branches of the public library in the borough, including the St. George branch at 10 Hyatt Street.

Borough Hall is modeled after early French Renaissance brick architecture. In general, the style commonly utilizes brick, contrasting trim, heavy classical ornamental forms, and steep mansard roofs punctuated by dormers. While there is no extant information as to why this style of building was chosen for Borough Hall, two thoughts include: (a) brick manufacturing was a major island industry, and, (b) the use of an early French Renaissance style could harken back to the Island's early settlers, many of whom were French Huguenots (see mural #4).

Prior to Staten Island's 1998 incorporation into New York City as one of the five boroughs, it was known as Richmond County and the location of its county government was Richmond Town, near Staten Island's geographical center. Consolidation into New York City abolished county government and thus suggested a more appropriate location for the seat of local government. St. George was chosen because it was easily accessible to and from Manhattan and was the hub of the Island's growing mass transit system, which included the ferries.

Information source: Landmarks Preservation Commission, March 23, 1982

# Frederick Charles Stahr
Murals Artist (1876-1946)

Frederick Charles Stahr was born on June 9, 1876, in New York City and lived as a youth on Staten Island. He studied art at the National Academy of Design and, after completing with honors, left for Europe to further his studies. Stahr began to receive commissions to copy old masters in various European museums and after approximately five years returned to the States, where he first became an instructor at Columbia University and then returned to assist at the National Academy of Design.

Amongst many of the mural commissions Stahr received: he assisted in painting the ceiling of the United States Treasury in Washington, D.C.; painting the "Court Scene" in the Newark Court House; painting the "History of Manhattan" in the Hotel Manhattan; assisted in painting the ceiling of the Metropolitan Opera House; and assisted in mural decorations of the Ottawa railroad station. During this time Stahr was also awarded the Prix de Rome, a three year term of study of Italian Masters of Art in the Vatican; he ultimately received his Master's degree in Arts and Letters.

In 1904, at the time of the construction of Staten Island's Borough Hall, Stahr presented his idea of painting murals commemorating the history of State Island to the building's architects. Even though he was promised the commission, insufficient funds curtailed the awarding of the job to Stahr. After 32 years, and through the Federal Works Progress Administration (WP), Stahr was finally awarded the commission to paint "the evolution of Staten Island." This was to be the first comprehensive series of paintings on a single subject to decorate the walls of a public building on Staten Island.

Stahr acquired an office on the third floor of Borough Hall for over two years and completed the 13 murals, which were then installed as you see them by 1940. Frederick Stahr died six years later at the age of 70.

Information source: Landmarks Preservation Commission, March 23, 1982, report; information on file in the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences; March 11, 1946, obituary, Staten Island Advance
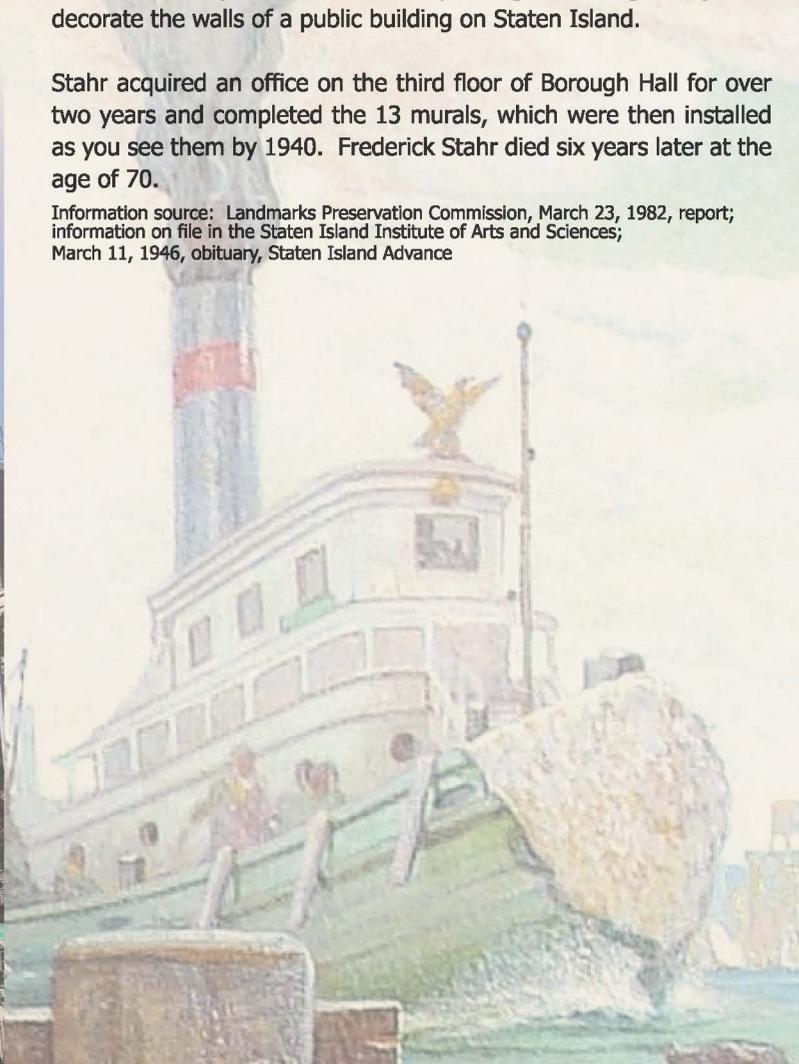
Salvatore Morani
Sculptor (1874-1964)

Born in Reggio, Calabria, Salvatore Morani began his career as a sculptor in his twenties, studying at the Belle Academy of Naples and Rome. He came to America in 1905 and soon thereafter restarted his artistic work. During World War I he made a replica of the Statue of Liberty to boost "Liberty Loan" sales. For the American Red Cross he made busts of a French solider and wounded doughboy, and when Belgium was appealing for aid, Morani sculpted the figure of Uncle Sam rolling up his sleeves to answer the plea of a woman kneeling at his feet. Other works during his long career include busts of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt in Hyde Park; statues and art pieces in the largest Roman Catholic cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri; and reproducing many famous art objects to large scale in connection with the construction of exhibition buildings during the 1939 World's Fair.

In 1924, Morani moved to Staten Island from the Bronx. His work in Borough Hall began as a WPA project prior to World War II and continued until 1950; it was Morani's longest undertaking. Morani had a strong desire to finish the Borough Hall sculptures, although the project was threatened by lack of sufficient funds. When he appealed to borough officials and was told that the only compensation would be that of a laborer's pay, he accepted. The six bas-relief sculptures located on the walls of the bay where the police desk is located were the last ones to be put in place (1950).

Information source: June 26, 1964, obituary, Staten Island Advance