

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 445 PARK AVENUE
Location: Block 1311 Lot 1
Name: 445 Park Avenue
Architect: Kahn & Jacobs
Constructed: 1946-1947

Summary:

The first post-war office building on Park Avenue – and the first fully air-conditioned commercial structure in New York City – 445 Park Avenue set the stage for future development along Park Avenue. The prominent architecture firm Kahn & Jacobs, architects of the Landmarked Municipal Asphalt Plant (1941-44), designed this building. The rectilinear glass and limestone structure, with its dark granite base, is composed of four setbacks, adhering to the 1916 zoning law. Continuous ribbon windows and limestone spandrel panels give the building a sleekness in stark contrast to its contemporary buildings. Lever Brothers Company, Schweppes, Ford Motor Company, Monsanto Chemical Company, and Universal Pictures Corporation all leased space in the structure in the 1940s.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 450 PARK AVENUE
Location: Block 1292 Lot 37
Name: former Franklin National Bank Building
Architect: Emery Roth & Sons
Constructed: 1968-1972

Summary:

This 33-story skyscraper has been called “the handsomest black skyscraper in the city.” 450 Park Avenue served as the headquarters of the Franklin National Bank from 1972-74, and its sleek black façade and dark glass set it apart from other structures on Park Avenue, especially those designed by Emery Roth & Sons in the previous decades. The building has a smooth façade treatment composed of “black granite” (likely gabbro or diabase) and graceful elliptical window segments of gray-tinted glass. Following the 1961 zoning resolution, the architects designed a privately owned public space on the west side of the structure. Emery Roth & Sons are known for designing more New York City office buildings than any other firm.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 4 EAST 43rd STREET
Location: Block 1277 Lot 67
Name: former Mehlin Piano Company Building
Architect: Andrew J. Thomas
Constructed: 1916

Summary:

4 East 43rd Street was built in 1916 and leased to the Paul G. Mehlin & Sons Piano Company. It was designed by Andrew J. Thomas and constructed by developers Klein & Jackson. Thomas is best known for designing the garden apartment buildings of Jackson Heights as well as several other apartment complexes throughout the city. Italianate in design, the marble-faced façade is articulated by a large double height pointed arch showroom window flanked by two smaller arched entrances. The top floor is fronted by a colonnade. The building is decorated with a frieze of putti and other classical details, some showing signs of deterioration.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 661 LEXINGTON AVENUE
Location: Block 1310 Lot 22
Name: former Babies Hospital
Architect: York & Sawyer
Constructed: 1901-1902

Summary:

Babies Hospital was established in 1897 by Sara and Julie McNutt, sisters and physicians who wished to create a hospital that would allow for the specific treatment of babies and children. Their vision was realized in this 8-story hospital, opened in 1902 and consisting of five wards with eighty beds. “As it stands finished, the hospital, with its many large windows and the glistening expanse of the glass wall and roof of the sun room on its upper story, gives at once the impression of a place where cheer and comfort abound” (The Sunday Morning Star, 1904).

Constructed during the “City Beautiful” movement, the building was designed in the Beaux-Arts style by architects Edward York and Philip Sawyer, who later became known as specialists in the design of banks and hospitals. The façade is characterized by heavy rusticated limestone on the lower two floors, with an intricate frieze and complicated Parisian-style brick and limestone decoration above. “Rusticated limestone and brick, belted with a frieze honoring its original clients. A quiet but strong background building” (AIA Guide). An addition was constructed in 1910.

Babies Hospital remained on Lexington Avenue until 1929, when staff and patients moved uptown to become part of the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. The building is currently in use as offices and retains many original details, including the cornice and balconies.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 111 EAST 48th STREET
Location: Block 1303 Lot 14
Name: Hotel Intercontinental (former Barclay Hotel)
Architect: Cross & Cross
Constructed: 1925-1926

Summary:

14-stories in height and “H” shaped in plan, the Barclay Hotel occupies the eastern end of the block fronting Lexington Avenue between E 48th and E 49th Streets, one of several hotels located in what is dubbed the “Hotel District” of East Midtown. At the time of construction in 1927 the building filled an independent block bounded on the west by Park Lane, a street that bisected the block (now a service alley closed to traffic). The H-shaped plan of the typical hotel floor “permitted the lobby and lounge to enjoy natural light from above.” (Stern et al. 1987) Described as “an elegant survivor of 1920s residential Park Avenue” in the AIA Guide to New York City, the Barclay Hotel is faced in brick above a limestone base, forming a sturdily dignified composition.

The hotel was designed in the Renaissance Revival style by Cross & Cross, who were best known for their later Art Deco corporate offices, including the RCA Tower (1931, now General Electric Building) and the City Bank-Farmers Trust Building (1931). The firm of Cross & Cross was formed in 1907 by brothers John Walter Cross (1878-1951) and Eliot Cross (1884-1949). John, who studied architecture at Columbia, and then at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, served as the firm’s chief designer, while brother Eliot took charge of the real-estate end of the business. (LPC)

The Barclay opened as a luxurious apartment hotel in 1926, catering to long-term tenants. Apartment hotels allowed developers to circumvent height restrictions on apartment houses. (Stern et al. 1987) The typology was subsequently phased out following the Multiple Dwelling Law of 1929, which eliminated the height restrictions. Today the building is still in use as a hotel.

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REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 18-20 EAST 50th STREET
Location: Block 1285 Lot 59
Name: New York Health & Racquet Club (former Grand Rapids Furniture Company Building)
Architect: Rouse & Goldstone; Joseph L. Steinman
Constructed: 1915

Summary:

This 12-story office building adjacent to Saks Fifth Avenue is designed in the Gothic Revival Style with a limestone-clad façade articulated by pointed arch openings at ground level, buttress-like piers, and stone pinnacles. This building was erected as offices and showrooms for the Grand Rapids Furniture Company, which had many showrooms throughout the city and the eastern United States. Following Grand Rapids' departure, the building was leased as office space from 1955 until 1977, when the New York Health and Racquet Club moved into the building.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 420 LEXINGTON AVENUE
Location: Block 1280 Lot 60
Name: Graybar Building
Architect: Sloan & Robertson
Constructed: 1925-1927

Summary:

The Graybar building was constructed along Lexington Avenue on the lot immediately to the south of the Grand Central Post Office. The building is integrated into the surrounding properties, adjoined by Grand Central Terminal to the west, the former Commodore Hotel (now Grand Hyatt) to the south, and the Grand Central Post Office to the north. When it opened the Graybar Building was the largest office building in the world, housing 12,000 workers in 1.2 million square feet of office space, and featured direct access to Grand Central Terminal. The major tenant at the time of its completion was the Graybar Electric Company Inc., for whom the building is named. Graybar Electric was formed in 1926 when parent company Western Electric spun off its distribution arm, naming it Graybar after Western Electric founders Elisha Gray and Enos Barton.

Designed by Sloan & Robertson, the u-shaped plan consists of thirty setback stories faced in buff-colored brick above a limestone base. A wide light court faces Lexington Avenue, allowing for light and air to reach most offices. The building's three limestone entrance façades are decorated to the north and south with Deco-Assyrian bas-reliefs, and in the center with an allegorical relief representing Transportation & Electricity. The southern entrance features a canopy above each of three doors. The center canopy is held in place by three steel rods that mimic the mooring lines of a ship with cone-shaped vermin baffles and rats depicted climbing the lines. Where anchored to the building, the rods emanate from decorative rosettes formed by rat heads. The side canopies are supported by rods anchored in the mouths of gargoyles.

The Graybar Building includes direct access to Grand Central Terminal via the southern entrance, which connects to GCT via a concourse running the depth of the building. The interior of the forty-foot Graybar Passage features a vaulted ceiling decorated in one section by a fresco portraying images of modern industry, including a locomotive passing under a bridge, an airship emerging from a cloud, and symbols of construction such as a Bessemer converter, indicating the processes used in the modern manufacturing of steel. The fresco is titled "Transportation & Construction" and was completed by artist Edward Trumbull in 1927 (Trumbull is also known for the bas-relief that decorates the façades of the nearby Chanin Building). Developer John R. Todd intended the Graybar Passage to lure tenants by offering them "easy access to the transportation, social and dining facilities of Terminal City." (Stern et al. 1987)

Above the limestone base, decorative elements are minimal. Todd "was a member of the new generation of real estate speculators that arose in the 1920s, men for whom building strictly an economic investment rather than a civic or egoistic endeavor." (Stern et al. 1987) Todd built high quality

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buildings that, while well made, were only as good as they needed to be in order to compete in the marketplace. At Graybar, Todd accepted ornamentation at the ground level “to impress prospective tenants” while forcing Sloan & Robertson to eliminate decoration from the top of the building – a location where Todd felt no one would appreciate the skyline level detail, and was therefore not worth the cost.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 509 LEXINGTON AVENUE
Location: Block 1302 Lot 51
Name: Radisson Lexington (former Hotel Lexington)
Architect: Schultze & Weaver
Constructed: 1928-1929

Summary:

At the southeast corner of 48th Street and Lexington Avenue stands the Hotel Lexington of 1929, designed by Schultze & Weaver and now the Radisson Lexington, one of several hotels located in what is dubbed the “Hotel District” of East Midtown. Leonard Schultze (1877-1951) was chief of design for Grand Central Terminal from 1903 to 1911 and then executive in charge of the design and construction of all buildings relating to the terminal. Spencer Fullerton Weaver was founder and president of the Fullerton Weaver Realty Company and had designed apartment buildings elsewhere on Park Avenue. The two joined forces in 1921 and the firm Schultze & Weaver was founded. The development boom of Miami and other parts of southern Florida propelled Schultze & Weaver into their roles as specialists of hotel building, such as the Breakers in Palm Beach (1925). When Florida's building boom came to an abrupt halt in 1926, Schultze & Weaver turned its attention to New York, designing such prominent hotels as the Sherry-Netherland, the Pierre and the Waldorf-Astoria.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 56 EAST 42nd STREET
Location: Block 1276 Lot 42
Name: One Grand Central Place (former Lincoln Building)
Architect: J.E.R. Carpenter; Dwight P. Robinson
Constructed: 1928-1929

Summary:

The Lincoln Building is a 55-story skyscraper constructed in 1929 on a site formally occupied by the Lincoln Storage Company and the Lincoln National Bank. Designed by J.E.R. Carpenter with Dwight P. Robinson, the office building is a stepped-back slab adorned with eight neo-Gothic arched windows at the upper floors. At completion the building was Manhattan's eighth tallest, featuring 922,000 square feet of office space and direct access to the subway and Grand Central Terminal. The lobby once contained the Daniel Chester French bronze model for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., but was recently moved to another location.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 17 EAST 47th STREET
Location: Block 1283 Lot 13
Name: Mercantile Library
Architect: Henry Otis Chapman
Constructed: 1932

Summary:

The New York Mercantile Library building was designed by Henry Otis Chapman and opened in 1932. Its namesake organization was founded in 1820 and opened in 1821 in one room on Fulton Street with 700 volumes and 150 subscribers. This private library was backed by merchants who sought to improve their employees' education. The library grew through the late 1800s, and in the 1870s reported an annual circulation of 156,000 volumes. But the establishment of the public library system at the beginning of the 20th century hurt the Mercantile and other private libraries.

Despite dwindling membership, in 1932 the trustees built a new structure at 17 East 47th Street as a real-estate investment, "elegant but much reduced in scope" from previous locations. The white marble facade, designed by Henry Otis Chapman, "could have been a store or shop building, but it had five modern book stacks on the fourth through eighth floors, offices and a board room on the third floor, a reading room and lounge on the second floor and a charging area at street level." (Gray 2001) At that time circulation was 71,000 among 3,000 members. After years of continuing decline, in 1989 membership had dwindled to 375 and the Library closed, but returned to life in the early 1990s. In 2005 it was once again resuscitated, this time as the Center for Fiction, which continues to use the building today. In 1998 the ground floor was renovated by Beyer Blinder Belle, but the building has maintained its architectural integrity, and is significant as the home to a cultural institution that was a precursor to the New York Public Library system.

[photo attached]

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REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 5 EAST 48th STREET
Location: Block 1284 Lot 6
Name: Swedish Seamen's Church (former New York Bible Society)
Architect: Wilfred Edward Anthony
Constructed: 1921

Summary:

The Swedish Seamen's Church was established on Water Street in 1873 to serve seafarers and resident Scandinavians. In 1978, the organization purchased the former New York Bible Society building at 5 East 48th Street, originally built in 1871 as one of a row of brownstones and altered in 1921 by architect Wilfred E. Anthony to its present neo-Gothic form. The Swedish Seamen's Church has retained these exterior details through today.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 125 PARK AVENUE (100 EAST 42nd STREET)
Location: Block 1296 Lot 1
Name: Pershing Square Building
Architect: John Sloan (York & Sawyer)
Constructed: 1921-1923

Summary:

Erected on the site of the former Grand Union Hotel, this 25-story brick and terra cotta office building was completed in 1923 and designed in the Romanesque style by architect John Sloan. Building materials were supplied by the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company, and as Christopher Gray notes, the façade depicts “intricate cross-set brickwork” and terra cotta ornament that easily goes unnoticed. Sloan himself leased space in the new building, and in 1924 opened the office Sloan & Robertson with partner Thomas Markoe Robertson. The firm is perhaps best known for their skyscraper designs, including the Graybar and Chanin buildings.

The Pershing Square Building takes its name from the section of 42nd Street directly in front of Grand Central Terminal, which was in turn named in honor of the commander of American forces in France during World War I, John J. Pershing.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 250 PARK AVENUE
Location: Block 1282 Lot 34
Name: 250 Park Avenue (former Postum Building)
Architect: Cross & Cross
Constructed: 1923-1924

Summary:

The Postum Building was completed in 1924 and built for the Postum Cereal Company. It was designed by Cross & Cross and Phelps Barnum, and is one of few remaining office buildings from the Terminal City era, as well as the first office building to be constructed north of Grand Central Terminal.

The U-shaped building rises from a limestone base with 16-story wings flanking a central block of 20 stories. The building fills an entire block from Park Avenue to the east, Vanderbilt Avenue to the west, 46th Street to the south, and 47th Street to the north. While understated in design (“Cross & Cross seem caught between a fairly literal and somewhat interpretive version of Classicism,” writes Robert A.M. Stern) the building played an important role in the development of Park Avenue, and at the time of its completion, the brick and terra cotta façade succeeded in “visually linking the commercialism of Terminal City to the south and the palatial apartment houses lining Park Avenue to the north.” (Stern et al. 1987) The building continues to be used as an office building today, offering flexible interiors accommodating the needs of tenants such as Pernod Ricard and AB InBev.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 525 LEXINGTON AVENUE
Location: Block 1303 Lot 53
Name: Marriott East Side (former Shelton Hotel)
Architect: Arthur Loomis Harmon
Constructed: 1922-1923

Summary:

The Shelton Hotel rises from southeast corner of 49th Street and Lexington Avenue, built in 1923 by developer James T. Lee, grandfather of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. This building is significant as the first hotel design to fully implement the 1916 zoning law, as well as for being the home of artist Georgia O'Keefe and photographer Alfred Stieglitz.

Lee's vision was a 1200-room bachelor hotel with club-type amenities such as swimming pool and squash courts, lounges and reading rooms, a gymnasium and bowling alley. These club hotels were the "most architecturally distinguished" apartment buildings of the time, built to fulfill the need for "respectable, affordable housing and communal social life among the burgeoning ranks of working middle class young single men and women," providing young professionals the service of a hotel and the intimacy of a private club. (LPC 2008) Originally built as a bachelor's female-free oasis, the model proved economically unsuccessful and after one year the Shelton opened its doors to women and men alike.

A limestone base supports the thirty-four story tower, where the front entrance is defined by a shallow loggia supported by six columns with Corinthian capitals. Above the ground floor, the rusticated brick façade reflects Romanesque, Byzantine, and other medieval styles, with limestone returning to clad each setback. Assorted gargoyles and other sculptural ornamentation playfully protrude above entrances and punctuate other parts of the building. But while material and architectural details draw from the past, the true significance of the Shelton was its very modern height and how it was used. The hotel was the first post-WWI skyscraper and one of the first buildings to take its form from a 1916 zoning law that required setbacks, producing the modern tower massing. The Shelton's design was praised by critics including Lewis Mumford, who called it "buoyant, mobile, serene, like a Zeppelin under a clear sky." The Shelton is also credited for jumpstarting Lexington Avenue as an area for moderately-priced hotels.

Prior to his work on the Shelton Hotel, architect Arthur Loomis Harmon (1878 – 1958) had designed the Allerton House at 145 E 39 Street, constructed from 1916-1918 and designated a New York City Landmark in 2008. The 39th Street residence was the third Allerton Hotel in New York City and the first of three to be constructed by Harmon. The Allerton was built just before the new zoning laws came into effect, and served as both transitional building and precursor to the design of the Shelton Hotel. With the Allerton, Harmon emphasized the vertical by recessing the window bays, but the massing still prioritized bulk over height.

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While the Allerton hinted at Harmon's designs to come, his vision was not fully realized until the construction of the Shelton Hotel, where the implementation of the 1916 zoning laws allowed for further emphasis of vertical expression. "At the Shelton, Harmon combined the use of rich materials, subdued stylistic references and emphasis upon the vertical of the Allerton design with the set-back massing mandated by the new zoning laws." (LPC 2008) At the time it was built, the thirty-four story Shelton was the tallest hotel in the world, praised by architectural historians and critics for Harmon's skill at negotiating the 1916 setback requirements. Considered Harmon's best-known individual work, the Shelton Hotel received awards from the Architectural League of New York and the American Institute of Architects. In 1929 Harmon became a partner with the firm of Shreve & Lamb, renamed Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, and who were later responsible for the design of the Empire State Building.

Among the Shelton's illustrious tenants were painter Georgia O'Keeffe and her husband, photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who in 1926 moved into a top-floor suite and lived there for several years. For the artists the Shelton served as both subject and vantage point from which to paint and photograph the city. O'Keeffe painted fifteen cityscapes from their balcony view, and Stieglitz' photographs include *From the Shelton, Looking Northwest*, which shows a partly built Waldorf-Astoria.

Today the Shelton continues to serve as a hotel, now known as the Marriott East Side. In 2000 a glass and steel canopy designed by architects Perkins Eastman was added to the main entrance on Lexington Avenue, and in 2012 a \$25-million dollar room renovation was completed. Despite these changes, the building remains true to its historic architectural and structural character.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 270 PARK AVENUE
Location: Block 1283 Lot 21
Name: JP Morgan Chase Tower (former Union Carbide Building)
Architect: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
Constructed: 1956-1960

Summary:

At the time of its completion, the Union Carbide Building was the tallest stainless-steel-clad building in the world and Park Avenue's tallest skyscraper, as well as Manhattan's tallest building constructed since 1933. This 52-story Park Avenue tower is set back behind a small plaza, and is connected to a 12-story annex on Madison Avenue. It is constructed of gray glass with stainless steel mullions and black-painted steel spandrel panels and exterior columns (achieved through a then-new metal coloring process, called Permyron, developed by Electro Metallurgical Company, a Division of Union Carbide Corporation). The building was considered an engineering challenge due to its location over the railroad tracks leading out of Grand Central. Gordon Bunshaft and Natalie de Blois' idea for a skyscraper tower, instead of a block of setbacks, ultimately influenced the new zoning regulations established in 1961 [the architects also designed Lever House (1950-52) and the Pepsi-Cola Building (1958-1960)].



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 52 VANDERBILT AVENUE
Location: Block 1279 Lot 45
Name: Vanderbilt Concourse Building
Architect: Warren & Wetmore
Constructed: 1914-1916

Summary:

This Warren & Wetmore design is immediately adjacent to the Yale Club and built as an office building by the New York Central Company. The structure is 20 stories high with a buff-colored brick façade over six-story limestone base, crowned on each façade by a three-story central loggia and cornice. It is significant as one of the remaining original buildings of the Terminal City era, and in 2000 was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION

Address: 50 VANDERBILT AVENUE
Location: Block 1279 Lot 28
Name: The Yale Club
Architect: James Gamble Rogers
Constructed: 1913-1915

Summary:

The Yale Club was designed by architect James Gamble Rogers and constructed in 1915 on property owned by New York Central Railroad. It is significant as one of the few remains buildings of the Terminal City era, and as a fine example of continuity of use.

The Yale Club was founded in 1897 near Madison Square before moving to 30 West 44th Street due to an increase in membership. Further growth of the institution as a national center of Yale graduate influence determined the selection of a location with close proximity to Grand Central Terminal and its commuter trains to New Haven. The new club was built in 1915 by the Yale Leasing Company on property owned by the New York Central Railroad, and included an underground pedestrian connection to Grand Central Terminal. Construction necessitated compliance with design regulations, including materials and height, resulting in a 21-story building with a neo-classical façade crowned by loggia and prominent bracketed cornice at the 21st floor.

Architect James Gamble Rogers designed several other prominent buildings in New York, including Butler Library at Columbia University and Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. Rogers also served as Architectural Advisor for Yale University, designing several buildings at the University.

