Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 19, 1998, Designation List 293
LP-1984

WEST STREET BUILDING, 90 West Street and 140 Cedar Street (aka 87-95 West Street, 21-25 Albany Street, and 136-140 Cedar Street), Borough of Manhattan. Built 1905-07; architect, Cass Gilbert.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 56, Lot 4.

On March 10, 1998, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the West Street Building, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five persons, including a representative of the owner and representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy and the Municipal Art Society, spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. A statement supporting designation has been received from Council Member Kathryn Freed.

Summary

The West Street Building, one of three major Downtown office buildings designed by Cass Gilbert, was built in 1905-07 for the West Street Improvement Corporation, a partnership headed by Howard Carroll. Carroll was president of two asphalt companies and vice-president of his father-in-law's Starin Transportation Company, which had major river shipping interests. Although today separated from the Hudson River by the landfill supporting Battery Park City, the site of the West Street Building originally had a highly visible location facing the waterfront along West Street. Carroll conceived of his project as a first-class skyscraper office building for the shipping and railroad industries. In addition to Carroll's companies, the building soon filled up with tenants including major companies in the transportation industry. The building's top floor was occupied by "The Garret Restaurant," which advertised itself as the highest restaurant in New York and boasted of its panoramic river and city views. Cass Gilbert was one of the most prominent architects in New York in the first decade of the twentieth century. His succession of early skyscrapers helped pave the way for the great romantic skyscraper towers of the 1920s and beyond. His West Street Building may be considered transitional from the "base-shaft-capital" arrangement of the late-nineteenth-century office buildings conceived as analogous to a classical column -- and perhaps best epitomized by his own design for the Broadway-Chambers Building -- to the romantic tower exemplified by his design for the Woolworth Building. While the West Street Building is tripartite in configuration, its upper floors are a romantic mansarded design. The building's Gothic vocabulary is an early instance of its use in American skyscraper design, anticipating the Woolworth Building. The clustered piers in the tower's middle section anticipate the verticality stressed in later skyscraper design. The West Street Building was one of many office buildings erected in lower Manhattan during the first decade following the consolidation of the City of Greater New York, but its handsome design set it apart, and it won widespread critical acclaim. Today, its exterior survives largely intact, and the building remains in commercial office use.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Carroll's dock-side skyscraper for the shipping trade

The West Street Building was conceived and built by the West Street Improvement Company, a syndicate of downtown business interests headed by Howard Carroll that included John Peirce, who served as the building's general contractor.[1] The company initially maintained its offices in the Broadway-Chambers Building, also designed by Cass Gilbert.

Born in Albany, New York, and educated in New York and abroad, Howard Carroll (1854-1916) worked as a journalist at the *New York Times*. He later joined the Starin Transportation Company, a large firm with river transportation interests, owned by his father-in-law, John Henry Starin (1825-1909).[2] By 1905, when Carroll formed the West Street Improvement Company, he had become the Starin Company's vice-president. He also had separate business interests unconnected to Starin, as president of both the Sicilian Asphalt Paving Company and the Asphalt Company of Canada.

Carroll's West Street Improvement Company conceived the West Street Building as a high-class office building specifically targeting the shipping industry. Though the site today is several blocks inland from the waterfront, West Street in 1905 ran along the shore of the Hudson River, and the new building rose directly across the street from the docks.[3] At the time West Street was lined with ferries and warehouses of the railroad and steamship companies.[4] In the words of a rental brochure for the West Street Building, it "commends itself particularly to railroads, engineers, dock builders, contractors, lawyers, shippers, and machinery and electrical trades."[5]

Carroll commissioned a design for the West Street Building in April 1905 from architect Cass Gilbert.[6]

Cass Gilbert (1859-1934)[7]

Cass Gilbert's commissions include several of New York City's major landmarks; the two most important of these, the U.S. Custom House and the Woolworth Building, are of national significance.[8]

Gilbert was a Midwesterner who trained and later practiced in the East. His career falls roughly into two parts: a local practice in St. Paul, Minnesota, in the 1880s and 1890s, and a national practice, based in New York, from 1900 until his death in 1934.

Gilbert was born the son of an engineer in Zanesville, Ohio, a town laid out in part by his grandfather. While still a child, he and his family moved to St. Paul, where he completed his secondary education. In 1876 he entered the office of A.M. Radcliffe, a local architect. Two years later he went east to study at the architecture school of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, then headed by William R. Ware; his teacher was a Frenchman, Eugene Letang.[9] After two years of study, Gilbert went to Europe; he had hoped to work for an English architect but was unable to find employment. After traveling briefly through France and Italy, chiefly to see Gothic cathedrals, he was obliged to return to the United States later the same year. In New York he joined the firm of McKim, Mead & White, which had been formed barely a year earlier in September 1879.

Unlike many major American architects of his era, Gilbert did not study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. His architectural education, however, reflected the American interpretation of Beaux-Arts ideas as promulgated through academic institutions and architectural apprenticeships. Eugene Letang had been an Ecole student; William R. Ware was one of the five architects who had studied in the New York atelier of Richard Morris Hunt, the first American to attend the Ecole. McKim, who was an Ecole student, and White, who was not, had both worked in the office of the second American to attend the Ecole, H.H. Richardson.

Returning to St. Paul in 1882, Gilbert set up his own practice. Mead had suggested he open a St. Paul branch of McKim, Mead & White,[10] but instead Gilbert formed a partnership with fellow M.I.T. graduate James Knox Taylor, which lasted eight years. During the last two decades of the century he built a solid reputation in St. Paul designing residences, churches, and office buildings; most of his designs were in the Shingle Style or the Richardsonian Romanesque.[11] When John Welborn Root died in 1891, Mead wrote to Gilbert from New York urging him to go to Chicago to become Daniel Burnham's new partner; Gilbert, however, chose to remain in St. Paul. He became president of the Minnesota chapter of the A.I.A., and was invited to sit on various architectural juries -- he was the only Westerner on the jury for the New York Public Library competition.

In 1895, Gilbert won the competition for the new Minnesota state capitol, a commission that established his national reputation.[12] Clearly reflecting the impact of the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition, Gilbert's design was an elegant Beaux-Arts building, which, in its monumental composition, classical style, and elaborate decoration, laid the groundwork for his 1899 winning entry in the New York Custom House competition.[13] In 1900, Gilbert moved permanently to New York.

Throughout his later careeer, Gilbert produced Beaux-Arts-inspired governmental buildings, including the Federal Courthouse in New York (1934), the Detroit Public Library (1914), the West Virginia state capitol in Charleston (1928-32), and the Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. (1933-35) among many others. These public monuments, which comprised a major portion of his national work, were lavishly decorated with sculpture and murals.

Gilbert's other major contribution to architecture was in the field of skyscraper design. As a Midwestern architect working during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, he was familiar with the technological developments in skyscraper construction in Chicago. His training in Eastern schools, on the other hand, enabled him to develop a style that was compatible with taste current in New York City when he moved there at the turn of the century. The unique combination of Midwestern technology, Eastern training, and Gilbert's personal design talents and beliefs helped him move away from the "base-shaft-capital" formula of early office buildings to the full-blown romantic skyscraper conception of the Woolworth Building, his most famous tall building.[14]

Gilbert's skyscraper designs reflected his clear belief in the value of studying the architecture of the past -- not to copy it, but certainly to adapt it. Speaking on the occasion of the presentation to him of the Gold Medal of Architecture by the Society of Arts and Sciences in honor of the Woolworth Building design, he said:

> . . . as in language new words are coined to express new meanings and old words become obsolete, as old uses are abandoned so new forms to meet new needs are developed (I almost said invented) as the necessity requires. . . . My plea therefore is . . . for the solution of our own problems in the spirit of our own . . . but to disregard nothing of the past that may guide us in doing so.[15]

Gilbert also believed, however, that his approach to skyscraper design was based on structural expression and the aesthetic treatment of materials. He argued that since commercial buildings required thin surfaces, these had to be treated decoratively, and that a thin, decoratively treated surface expressed the structural fact that the skyscraper was a steel-cage structure, clearly not supported by its terra-cotta or stone cladding. One of the devices he used in this decorative treatment was proportion; another was color. All these aspects of design came to be embodied in the West Street Building.

The West Street Building and Its Design

During the first decade of the new century, following the 1898 consolidation of the City of Greater New York, the lower Manhattan business district experienced a boom in office building construction, with 40 new buildings in the financial district alone.[16] Within just a few blocks of the West Street Building, nine new buildings were under construction in 1906, including the United States Express Building, the Singer Building, and the Evening Post Building; in height they varied from 18 to 40 stories.[17]

For the new building, Carroll and his partners chose a site with a frontage of 159 feet on West Street, facing the Hudson River, between Cedar and Albany streets.[18] The location put the building in the heart of an area devoted to riverfront commerce, described in 1899 as "occupied with freight and ferry houses of great railroad and steamship lines."[19] It also put the building on a waterfront site with excellent views in all directions, and offices convenient to docks and ferries to rail terminals.

The owners and architects of the West Street Building filed their application in 1905 for an office building of 23 and 28 stories, estimated to cost $2 million.[20] Construction began in April the following year, and was completed in 1907. The John Peirce Company, the West Street Building contractor, maintained offices in the building, as did Carroll's Sicilian Asphalt Paving Company. Railroad interests in the building initially included the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad Company, which rented the seventeenth through twentieth floors (the portion of the building which has the most ornately detailed facades). The DL & W Railroad owned both Pier 13 (earlier called Pier

20) at nearby Cortlandt Street, and a railroad and ferry terminal in Hoboken, New Jersey, completed in 1907; from the West Street Building windows, railroad executives could observe traffic between the two.[21] Because of the nature of its tenants, the building was soon known as the "Railroad and Iron Exchange Building"[22] or the "Coal and Iron Building."[23] Its profile as a tall building on the waterfront skyline also attracted the "Garret Restaurant," called "the world's highest restaurant," which was located on the top floor and had river and city views.[24]

The West Street Building was one of four major office buildings designed by Cass Gilbert in the northeastern United States before the outbreak of World War I, the others being the Brazer Building (1896) in Boston, and the Broadway-Chambers Building (1899-1900) and the Woolworth Building (1911-1913), both in New York City. In those buildings Gilbert charted the course of development of the skyscraper from the nineteenth-century "base-shaft-capital" type to the grand, romantic tower type, exemplified by the Woolworth, which became the prototype for the great towers of the 1920s and 1930s. The West Street Building bridged the gap from the one to the other.

Both the Brazer Building and the Broadway-Chambers Building were office buildings of the "base-shaft-capital" type, in which the building was seen as analogous to a classical column: a decoratively treated "base" of one or two stories arranged around the entrance, a decoratively treated "capital" of several stories at the top, and a tall "shaft" of intervening stories. The Broadway-Chambers Building, a project in which Gilbert himself also acted as developer,[25] was widely admired at the time of its completion as one of the finest examples of the "base-shaft-capital" type yet produced.

Gilbert approached an office building project from two perspectives: as a real-estate transaction which required economy and efficiency -- in a c.1900 article he described an office building as "a machine that makes the land pay"; and as an opportunity to create a striking design -- in the same article he also wrote, "one must not lose sight of the fact that the machine is none the less a useful one because it has a measure of beauty, and that architectural beauty, judged even from an economic standpoint, has an income-bearing value."[26]

The West Street Building was, to some extent, organized along a tripartite scheme, but it represented a major advance in office building design. Although arranged as base-shaft-capital, the building's design downplayed the "base," emphasized the verticality of the "shaft" with tall uninterrupted, clustered piers, and made the "capital" an elaborate Gothic fantasy with a mansard roof. The West Street Building's vertical expression and Gothic skin were the direct predecessors of the Woolworth Building, as was its use of color.

That Gilbert, in his design for the West Street Building, was consciously moving away from the tripartite paradigm towards the tall tower is demonstrated by one of his early proposals. The building in that proposal rose to a five-story tower at the top, similar in spirit to the tower of the Woolworth Building.[27] Since he couldn't have the tower, Gilbert in his subsequent design emphasized an elaborate, seven-story upper portion with mansarded roof.

Gilbert's choice of Gothic similarly helped move skyscraper design along towards the tower ideal. In one of the first consistent uses of Gothic detailing on a tall office building,[28] Gilbert took as models both the secular (town halls in Brussels and Louvain) and the religious (the tower of the cathedral in Malines, Belgium),[29] and used the Gothic to emphasize the tower's sheer verticality.

In another move anticipating his design for the Woolworth Building, Gilbert conceived the West Street Building's facades in terra cotta, which was manufactured by the Atlantic Terra-Cotta Company.[30] Gilbert took advantage of the versatility of terra cotta to give the building polychromatic luster, making the shaft beige, but adding details in gold, blue, red, and green.[31]

Fellow practitioners and critics writing in the contemporary architectural press praised Cass Gilbert's new skyscraper. Architect John Carrère told Gilbert, "if my opinion counts for anything I think it is the most successful building of its class."[32] Painter Edwin Blashfield wrote to Gilbert in 1907:

> I want to write a line to tell you what a splendid impression your West Street Building makes on one, as one comes up the harbor on the way back from the other side of the Atlantic. . . . Indeed I didn't suppose a skyscraper could be so picturesque and handsome. I've always admired the effect of power in such buildings but in yours you create a type which is immediately satisfying to the eye.[33]

The critics shared this opinion. Claude Bragdon, writing in the *Architectural Record*, called the West Street Building "an aesthetic and technical triumph . . . . in mass, in outline, in color, in detail, the building is the work of a master mind, the last word in New York skyscraper architecture."[34] Five years after the building's completion, Francis Swales wrote in the *Architectural Review*: "Expression without exaggeration of the type of construction, combined with sparing use and judicious placing of ornament, in good scale, with due regard to the relative importance of different points of view, account for the excellence of effect of the West Street Building."[35]

The best known critic of the day, Montgomery Schuyler, praised "the pinnacled diadem of the West Street Building . . . the cynosure of a justified admiration."[36] He reported that Gilbert's building had the unusual merit of winning both popular and critical approval. Schuyler particularly admired the building's crowning stories, and the building's expression of "its actual construction by the substitution of continuous reeded uprights for the blank brick piers of the [Gilbert's earlier] Broadway Chambers." He felt the shaft treatment of the reeded piers expressed the structural frame within, "for the first time." And he opined that the building demonstrated that the Gothic was most appropriate for "even . . . a practical and prosaic New York skyscraper."[37]

Later opinion confirmed the early reactions. Guy Kirkham, writing in *Pencil Points* in 1934, the year Gilbert died, called the West Street Building "one of the most satisfying buildings of New York."[38]

Later History

The West Street Building was purchased in 1923 by the Brady Security and Realty Corp. During the Depression, in 1933, the company replaced the elevators, rehabilitated the office space, and upgraded mechanical systems. And the company retained Cass Gilbert (now age 74) to modernize the first floor interiors of what was then called the Brady Building. The interior had originally been arched and groin-vaulted, with elaborate terra-cotta detail.[39] The modernization was described at the time as improving the "outdated lobby, crusted with ornamental ironwork," and Gilbert was quoted as saying: "I found much professional pleasure in designing it."[40] The exterior of the building, however, was left largely intact. More recent changes include modifications to the storefronts and entrances, replacement of window sash, the installation of air-conditioning louvers, and the installation of exterior light fixtures for night-time illumination. (These are described in greater detail below.)

The West Street Building no longer occupies a riverfront site, because the shoreline has been significantly extended with landfill for Battery Park City. It remains, however, a strikingly handsome architectural presence in lower Manhattan, and one of Cass Gilbert's major skyscraper designs.

Description

The twenty-three story building, a rough C shape in plan, fills a lot which is a parallelogram in shape, extending along the eastern side of West Street from Albany Street to Cedar Street. The facades have nine bays on West Street, seven bays on Cedar, and six bays on Albany, while the eastern facade has two wings enclosing a light court, with four bays on the southern wing and two bays on the northern wing. Each, organized in accordance with a tripartite scheme, is finished with the same materials and has similar motifs. A three-story base of beige Fox Island granite on a polished red granite water table sets off the upper stories, faced in glazed beige architectural terra cotta (over a brick backing). A dormered three-story mansard roof is clad in standing seam metal. The window sash are are one-over-one aluminum replacements. Light fixtures have been installed at the bases of the windows on the twentieth and twenty-first stories to provide night-time illumination for the mansard roof.

West Street Facade

This nine-bay facade is symmetrically arranged with single end bays flanking seven double bays. A two-story arcade is separated by a corbelled cornice from a transitional third story. A more ornate cornice at the third story sets off the twelve-story midsection with continous clustered piers flanking window openings separated by recessed spandrels. Another transitional story signals the four-story arcaded crown of the building, which in turn carries the three-story mansard roof.

Base. A projecting two-story three-center arched entrance opening, outlined with a foliate molding, is centered in the facade. The arch voussoirs originally had alternating granite and contrasting marble panels. A few red marble panels survive; the others have been replaced by concrete panels. Slender engaged marble columns with foliate capitals and set on bases flank the entrance. (The columns

have been treated with a protective coating to prevent further deterioration to the stonework.) Foliate bosses and tracery adorn the arch spandrels. The keystone is a winged owl. The entrance infill is non-historic and includes a revolving door flanked by single doors below a marquee bearing the address "90 WEST ST." and a window above. Two-story segmental arch openings with cast-iron storefronts above granite bulkheads form the remaining bays. The storefronts appear to be modified versions of the originals with tripartite windows below tripartite transoms. Paneled spandrels set off the tripartite windows at the second story. Louvers have replaced glass in many of the transoms and the second-story windows. Projecting canopies have been placed above several of the storefronts at the first story. The door in the southern end bay is non-historic and set below a non-historic canopy. The door in the northern end bay is of bronze and glass and approached by two granite steps. Engaged granite columns are placed at the corners of the facade. A continuous corbelled cornice extends above the second story. It projects slightly above the entrance bay where it incorporates carved heads and supports carved bases for lamps (removed).

The third story has paneled wall sections flanking square-headed window openings with paneled reveals and foliate bosses at the upper corners. The end bays have more elaborate surrounds with pilasters supporting carved heads and a tracery motif at the window heads. A band accented with red, gold and blue panels sets off a cornice with a foliate molding. This cornice incorporates slightly projecting balconettes with lion head corbels at the base of the fourth story windows. Engaged columns accent the corners.

Midsection. Single end bays and paired window bays are set off by clustered piers which rise for twelve stories (floors four through fifteen). The paired windows are separated by slender piers rising to foliate capitals at the twelfth story. Recessed terra-cotta spandrels separate windows between the floors. Louvers for air conditioning have been installed in the spandrels below the windows. Small metal railings are placed at the base of the bays on the projecting balconettes. The bays culminate in arches adorned with finials, bosses, and winged figures above the twelfth story. Blue terra-cotta panels fill the arch spandrels. A wide molding with cusped motifs sets off the transitional sixteenth story. At the sixteenth story, the windows have ornamented molded surrounds, and strapwork motifs with foliate bosses flank the window bays.

Crown. Floors seventeen through nineteen are handled as a very ornate three-story window arcade. Tripartite windows with paneled spandrels between the floors are recessed behind three-center arched reveals adorned with floral motifs in accents of green, blue, and gold. Foliate finials top the arches, which are flanked by projecting colonnettes accented by vertical foliate moldings. The foliate colonnette capitals carry the boss-adorned bases for the griffin figures at the twentieth story. A band of blue and gold diamond panels spans the facade above the arches. The twentieth story has closely spaced double and triple window bays flanked by colonnettes. A continuous arched screen shelters the tops of the windows. The griffins separating the bays are set below their own small canopies with blue terra-cotta panels. A foliate cornice with gargoyle motifs sets off the mansard roof.

Mansard. An ornate series of arched and finialed terra-cotta dormers form a parapet at the base of the roof. The polygonal dormers at the corners originally carried tourelles (later removed). Two tiers of smaller dormers, the upper tier hooded, punctuate the upper portion of the roof. The roof slopes are covered with standing-seam metal and terminate in a terra-cotta cresting (somewhat modified since originally installed).

Cedar Street Facade

Like the West Street facade, this facade is symmetrically arranged with single end bays flanking five double bays. The articulation of the components is like that of the facade on West Street.

Base. The treatment and detail of the base is like that on West Street, although the projecting two-story arched entrance opening is placed at the third bay from the right, instead of being centered. The alternate address "140 CEDAR ST." is placed on the projecting marquee. The western bay has a bronze and glass door above granite steps. As on West Street, the storefronts in the remaining bays are modified versions of the originals. Those on either side of the entrance bay have non-historic projecting canopies.

Midsection. The treatment and detail is like that on West Street.

Crown. The treatment and detail is like that on West Street.

Mansard. The treatment and detail is like that on West Street.

Albany Street Facade

Like the West Street facade, this facade is symmetrically arranged with single end bays

flanking four double bays. The articulation of the components is like that of the facade on West Street.
Base. The treatment and detail of the base is like that on West Street. A freight entrance with metal doors is placed in the easternmost double bay. The middle bay has new infill at the first story. The other bays have storefronts which are modified versions of the originals, similar to those on West Street, although the bulkheads are painted wood instead of granite. There are no canopies above any of the storefronts.
Midsection. The treatment and detail is like that on West Street.
Crown. The treatment and detail is like that on West Street.
Mansard. The treatment and detail is like that on West Street.

Eastern Facade

This facade is organized with two wings enclosing a light court with four bays on the southern wing and two bays on the northern wing. The walls are visible and articulated from the thirteenth story up as they rise above the building immediately to the east.[41] Floors thirteen through sixteen correspond to the midsection of the other facades. The walls are faced with buff brick. The unarticulated window openings are paired in the northern wing and paired, flanked by single openings, in the southern wing. As on the other facades, the sixteenth story is a transitional one, set off by corbelled bandcourses. Floors seventeen through twenty correspond to the crown of the other facades, and they are similarly articulated as a three-story window arcade with a story of double and triple window bays above, although the detail is less ornate. The articulation and form of the three-story mansard is particularly noticeable on this side of the building, and the detailing continues from the other facades. The inner walls of the light court continue for one bay from the wings as a detailed reveal. Otherwise the walls are faced with buff brick, punctuated by window openings. Large openwork trusses link the light court walls at the seventh, tenth, twelfth, and sixteenth stories, although only the uppermost one is visible.

Report prepared by
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NOTES

1. Sharon Irish, "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay': The West Street Building in New York," *Technology & Culture*, 30 (April 1989), 391.
2. This summary of Carroll's life is based on Sharon Lee Irish, "Cass Gilbert's Career in New York, 1899-1905," Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1985.
3. Because West Street faced the waterfront, the street numbers ran consecutively, rather than having even numbers on one side of the street and odd numbers on the other. Hence, "90" was chosen as the primary address number within a span of 87-95 West Street.
4. E. Idell Zeisloft, *The New Metropolis* (New York: D. Appleton, 1899), cited in Irish, "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay'," 390.
5. In the Vertical Files, Cass Gilbert Papers, New-York Historical Society; cited by Irish, Ibid., 391.
6. Ibid., 380. The West Street Improvement Co. did not take title to the property until June 1905, acquiring Block 56, Lots 4 and 6-10. New York County, Office of the Register, Section 1, Liber 91, page 297, Liber 93, page 281.
7. The following account of Cass Gilbert's career is based on Robert Allan Jones, "Cass Gilbert, Midwestern Architect in New York," Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1976, except where otherwise noted.
8. Both buildings are National Historic Landmarks as well as designated New York City Landmarks.

9. Jones, 10-11.

10. Jones, 62.

11. Jones, 63ff.

12. "The New Minnesota State Capitol at St. Paul," *The Western Architect*, 4 (Oct. 1905), 3-32.

13. See Landmarks Preservation Commission, *United States Custom House Interior Designation Report* (LP-1022), report by Ruth Seldin-Sturgill (New York: City of New York, 1979). The Custom House commission was hotly contested by local architects, who considered Gilbert an outsider with no claims to it and charged collusion between Gilbert and his former partner Taylor who sat on the jury.

14. This is the major thesis of the Jones dissertation.

15. Cass Gilbert, "Response on the occasion of the presentation of The Gold Medal for Architecture of the Society of Arts and Sciences to Cass Gilbert, New York, January 16, 1931," reprinted in Julia Finch Gilbert, *Cass Gilbert: Reminiscences and Addresses* (New York: Privately printed, 1935), 115.

16. Irish, "Cass Gilbert's Career in New York," 234.

17. "Skyscraper Builders in Gigantic Race," *Record and Guide*, 77 (June 30, 1906), 1237.

18. Structurally, the building's site posed challenges. In particular, the structural engineer, Gunvald Aus, used pile foundations instead of caissons, an unusual, and controversial, decision for a waterside site where bedrock lay fifty feet below grade. For an extended discussion of structural issues, see Irish, "Cass Gilbert's Career in New York," 215-232. The interior fireproofing, another major issue for tall office buildings, was executed in terra-cotta tile by the National Fireproofing Company. See "Modern Office Buildings," *Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, 8 (June 1907), 447.

19. Zeisloft, 586; cited in Irish, "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay'," 390.

20. New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building Application No. 1376-1905. The plan as filed called for a five-story tower to rise from the center of the structure, which would make the building higher than the Flatiron Building. Carroll decided against this in April 1906. See Irish, "Cass Gilbert's Career in New York," 221.

21. Ibid., 218.

22. Irish, "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay'," 392. This name is shown on the *Atlas of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1899, updated 1909), vol. 1, plate 3.

23. Sarah Bradford Landau and Carl W. Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 321.

24. Irish, "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay'," 392, calls it a forerunner of "Windows on the World" in the World Trade Center.

25. For a fuller treatment see the relevant chapter in Jones.

26. Cass Gilbert, "The Financial Importance of Rapid Building," *Engineering Record*, 41 (June 30, 1900), 624. Cited, with a detailed discussion, in Irish, "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay'," 376-397.

27. Published in "The West Street Building, New York, N.Y.," *American Architect and Building News, International Edition*, 91 (Jan 19, 1907). See note 20 above.

28. For a discussion of earlier uses of Gothic in skyscraper design, see Robert A. Jones, *Cass Gilbert: Midwestern Architect in New York* (New York: Arno Press, 1982), 102-105. In particular, Jones cites a 1905 article in the *Craftsman* with responses from such architects as Bertram Goodhue and Louis Sullivan, and such examples as Solon S. Beman's Studebaker Building, of 1905, and Burnham & Company's Fisher Building, of 1906, both in Chicago. Jones believes, however, that these earlier instances were "incidental," and that the West Street Building was the "first firm step" towards a more serious Gothic skyscraper design.

Irish, in "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay'," 396, cites similar examples, and reaches a similar conclusion: "Still, there were no previous instances of such a successful combination of verticality, picturesque roofline, and Gothic details as that of the West Street Building."

29. See Irish, "Cass Gilbert's Career in New York," 246.

30. *Architecture*, 15 (May 15, 1907), plates XLff.

31. Susan Tunick, *Terra-Cotta Skyline: New York's Architectural Ornament* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 59.

32. Irish, "Cass Gilbert's Career in New York," 248.

33. Irish, "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay'," 396.

34. Claude Bragdon, "Architecture in the United States: III. The Skyscraper," *Architectural Record*, 26 (July 1909), 96.

35. Francis S. Swales, "The Work of Cass Gilbert," *Architectural Review*, 31 (Jan. 1912), 16.

36. Montgomery Schuyler, "The Evolution of the Skyscraper," *Scribner's Magazine*, 46 (Sept. 1919), 257-271. Reprinted in Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 436.

37. [Montgomery Schuyler], "The West Street Building," *Architectural Record*, 22 (Aug 1907), 108.

38. Guy Kirkham, "Cass Gilbert, Master of Style," *Pencil Points*, 15 (1934), 548.

39. See *Architecture* for views of the original condition.

40. "Costs were held down," *Architectural Forum*, 60 (March 1934), 21.

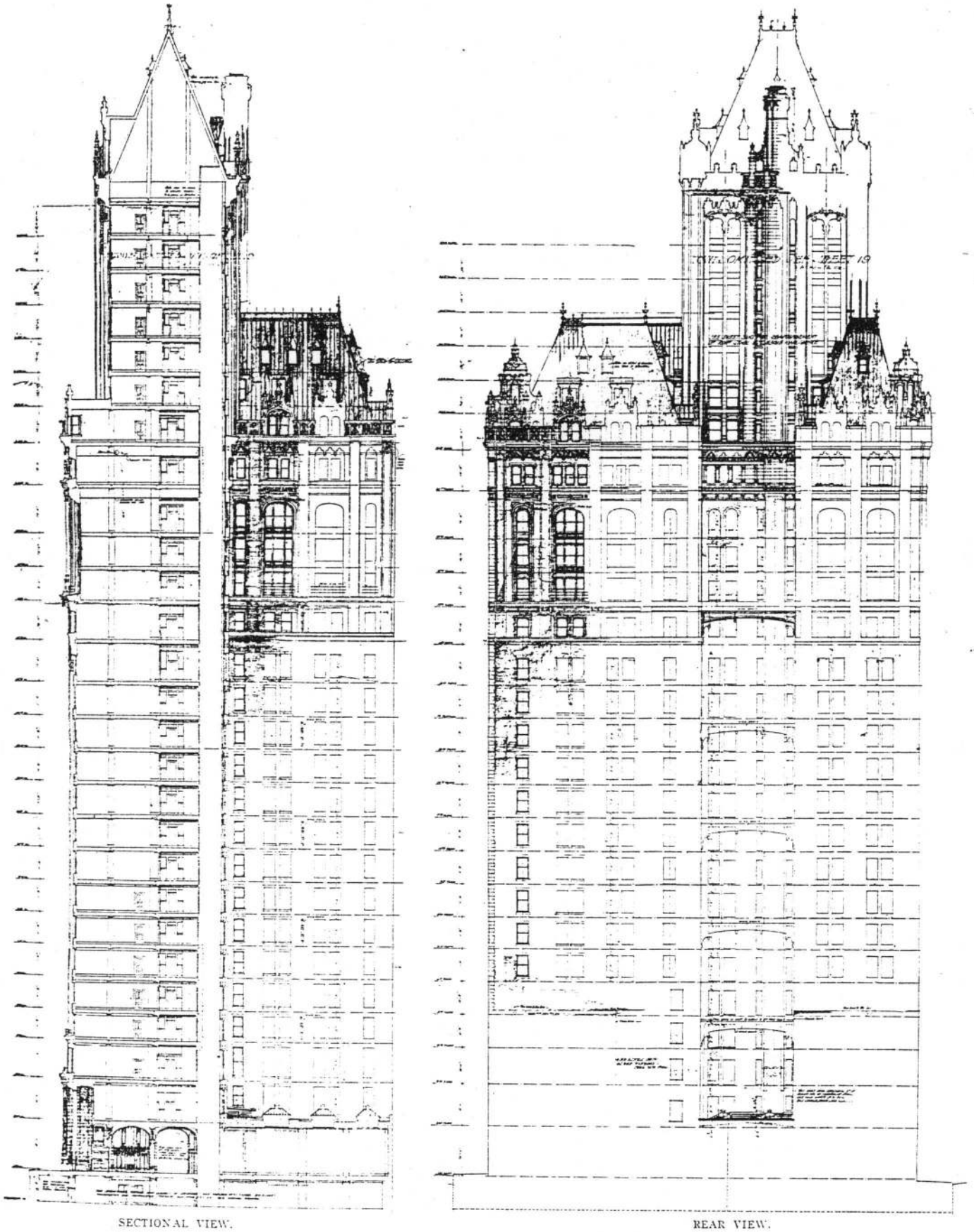
41. The West Street Improvement Co. entered into an easement agreement with P. Ballantine & Sons, owner of the adjacent property, in 1906, to allow the windows and light court on this elevation. See New York County, Office of the Register, Section 1, Liber 108, page 7.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the West Street Building has a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the West Street Building is one of three major Downtown office buildings designed by Cass Gilbert, one of the most prominent architects in New York in the first decade of the twentieth century; that it was built in 1905-07 for the West Street Improvement Corporation, a partnership headed by Howard Carroll, the president of two asphalt companies and vice-president of his father-in-law's Starin Transportation Company, which had major river shipping interests; that, although today separated from the Hudson River by the landfill supporting Battery Park City, the site of the West Street Building originally had a highly visible location facing the waterfront along West Street; that Carroll conceived of his project as a first-class skyscraper office building for the shipping and railroad industries and that, once completed, the building filled up with tenants including major companies in the transportation industry; that the building's top floor was occupied by "The Garret Restaurant," which advertised itself the highest restaurant in New York and boasted of its panoramic river and city views; that Gilbert's West Street Building may be considered transitional from the "base-shaft-capital" arrangement of the late-nineteenth-century office buildings conceived as analogous to a classical column -- and perhaps best epitomized by his own design for the Broadway-Chambers Building -- to the romantic tower exemplified by his design for the Woolworth Building; that while the West Street Building is tripartite in configuration, its upper floors are a romantic mansarded design; that the building's Gothic vocabulary is an early instance of its use in American skyscraper design, anticipating the Woolworth Building; that the clustered piers in the tower's middle section anticipate the verticality stressed in later skyscraper design; that the West Street Building, while one of many office buildings erected in lower Manhattan during the first decade following the consolidation of the City of Greater New York, had a design which set it apart and won it widespread critical acclaim; and that its exterior survives largely intact and the building remains in commercial office use.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the West Street Building, 90 West Street and 140 Cedar Street (aka 87-95 West Street, 21-25 Albany Street, and 136-140 Cedar Street), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 56, Lot 4, as its Landmark Site.

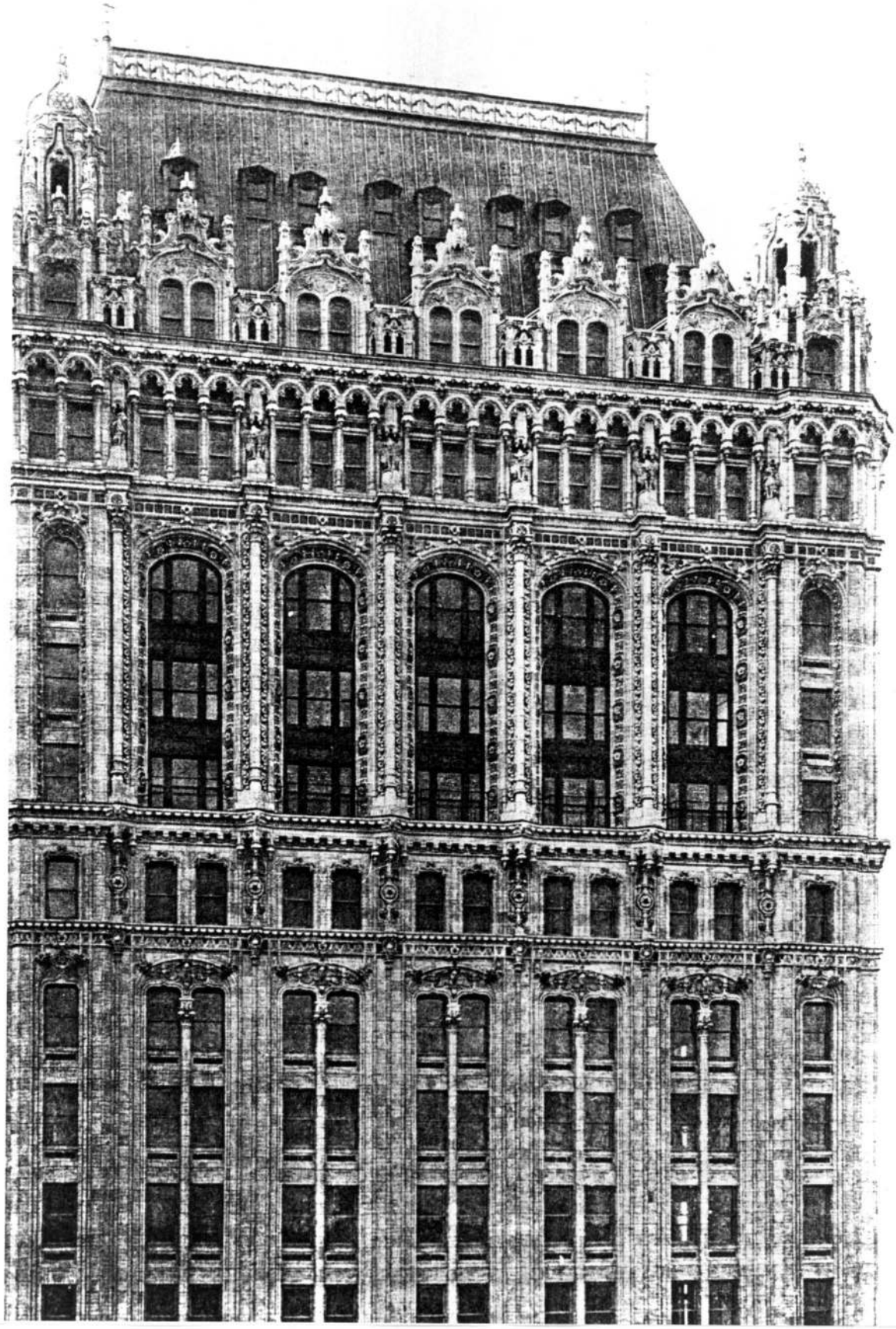


SECTIONAL VIEW. REAR VIEW.

ORIGINAL SCHEME FOR THE "WEST STREET BUILDING," NEW YORK, N. Y.

West Street Building - sections showing original tower plan
Source: *American Architect amd Building News*, 91 (Jan. 19, 1907), Plate

West Street Building in 1907, view to northeast
Photo: Wurts Bros., *Architecture*, 16 (Sept. 15, 1907), Plate 75



West Street Building in 1907, detail of Cedar Street facade
Photo: Wurts Bros., *Architecture*, 15 (May 15, 1907), Plate 40

Eastern elevation of West Street Building in 1907

Detail of Cedar Street entrance in 1907

Source: *Architectural Record*, 22 (Aug. 1907), 104, 105

West Street Building, 90 West Street and 140 Cedar Street, Manhattan
West Street Facade

Photo: Carl Forster

West Street Building, 90 West Street and 140 Cedar Street, Manhattan
Cedar Street Facade

Photo: Carl Forster

West Street Building - Detail of West Street Base

West Street Building - Detail of Cedar Street Base

Photos: Carl Forster

West Street Building - Detail of Albany Street Base

Photo: Carl Forster

West Street Building - Detail of crown on West Street Facade

West Street Building - Detail of arched screen at 20th floor

Photos: Carl Forster

Eastern elevation at upper stories of West Street Building

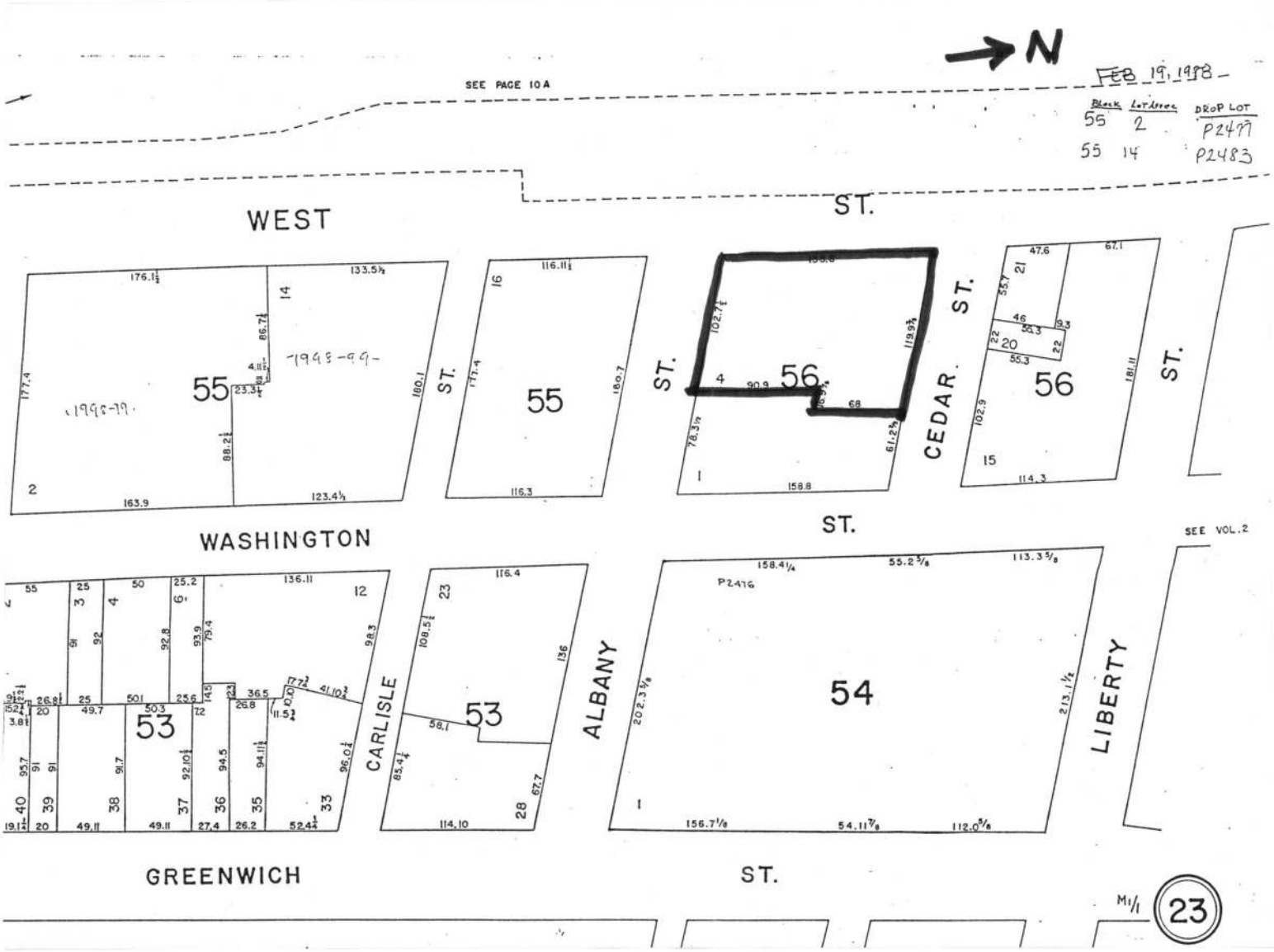
Detail of West Street entrance

Photos: Carl Forster

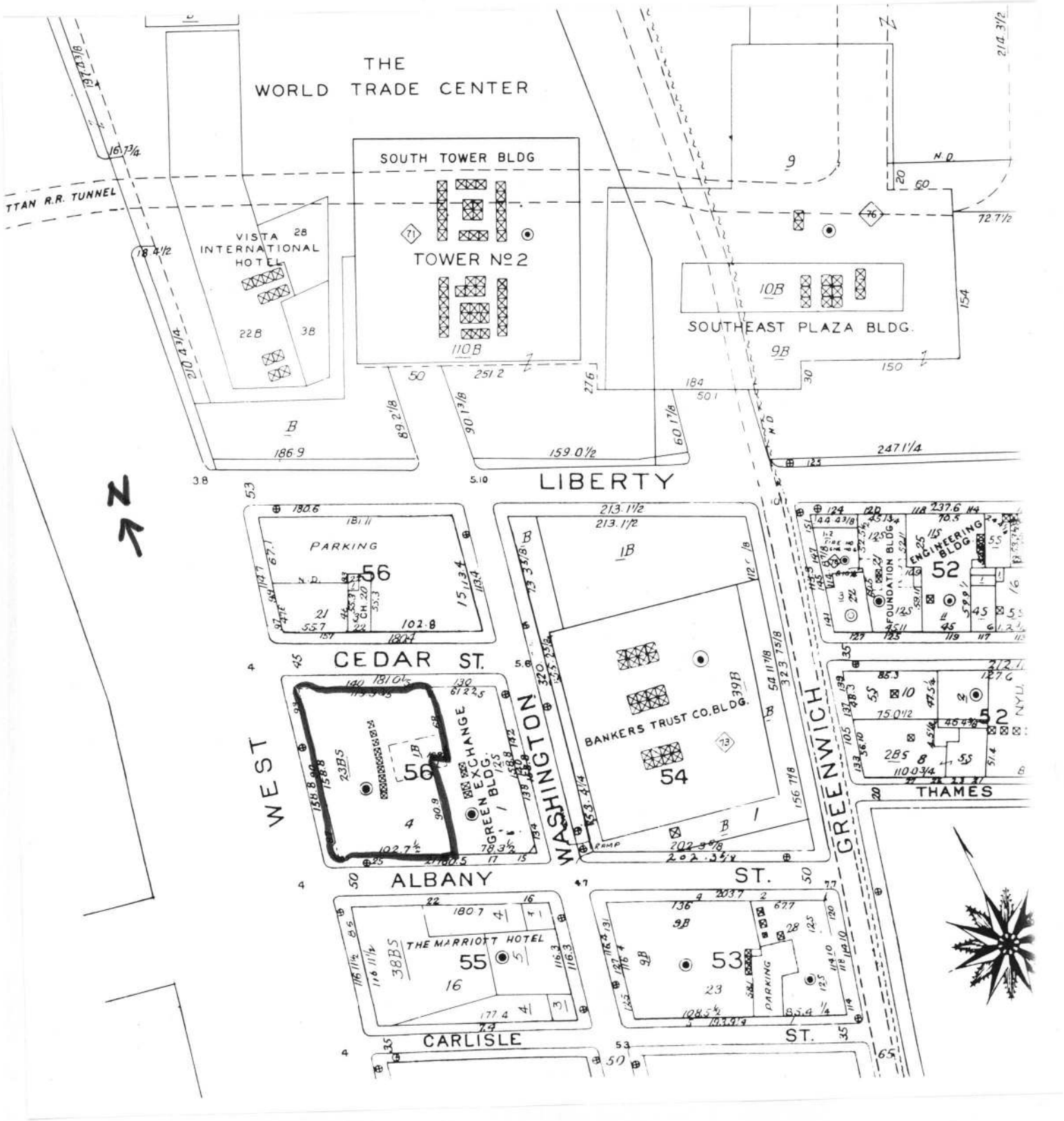
Detail of 15th through 20th floors

Detail of crown at southwest corner

Photos: Carl Forster



West Street Building, 90 West Street and 140 Cedar Street (aka 87-95 West Street, 21-25 Albany Street, and 136-140 Cedar Street), Borough of Manhattan
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 56, Lot 4
Source: Department of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map



West Street Building, 90 West Street and 140 Cedar Street (aka 87-95 West Street, 21-25 Albany Street, and 136-140 Cedar Street), Borough of Manhattan
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 56, Lot 4
Source: *Manhattan Landbook of the City of New York* (TRW-Redi, 1996-97), Plate 3