

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name West Street Building

other names/site number 90 West Street

2. Location

street & number 90 West Street [] not for publication

city or town New York [] vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10003

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William Caruso, SHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

12/05/06
Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
[] determined not eligible for the National Register

[] removed from the National Register

[] other (explain) _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

1.25.07
date of action

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/business, store, restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/multiple dwelling, specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements:

Skyscraper

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls Stone (granite). Terra cotta.

Brick.

roof metal (copper) and fiberglass

other marble, cast iron

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

7. Description

Introduction

The West Street Building (also known as 90 West Street) is located on a trapezoidal lot on West Street between Cedar and Albany streets in lower Manhattan. The site extends the full 158'-8" block of West Street between Albany and Cedar Streets; the site extends 102' east along Albany Street and 109' east along Cedar Street. The site has a very slight slope down from north to south. It is a twenty-three-story building on a C-shaped plan (above the first floor), with three primary facades facing West, Cedar and Albany Streets. It has a three-story granite base, a shaft clad in terra cotta and a three-story mansard roof of copper. The façade is adorned with the faces of lions, eagles, American Indian chiefs, and gargoyles. The building was designed by Cass Gilbert and completed in 1907.

90 West Street served as an office building until 2001. On September 11, 2001, the building was midway through a program to repair weathered terra cotta and brick when the World Trade Center was attacked. Located one block south of the former World Trade Center site, the building was damaged by the collapse of the towers. During the attacks on the 11th, airplane explosions showered the building and its neighbors with wreckage, and heavy steel debris from the collapsing south tower penetrated about ten areas on the building's north façade, destroying sections of wall, windows, spandrel beams and adjacent portions of floor slab ranging from one to five floors in height. Steel from 2 WTC also hit the roof, and a large group of three-story-high triple columns emblematic of the tower design catapulted through the air and into the sidewalk vault in the basement of 90 West Street. Burning debris ignited multiple fires, melting steel and glass interior furnishings and collapsing ceilings and ductwork. Overall there was moderate to severe fire damage in about half of the building.

In the aftermath of the attacks of September 11th, the future of the West Street Building was in doubt. But, overcoming major hurdles, the building was painstakingly restored to its original grandeur. After three years of work the building's exterior was restored and the interior was converted into a 410-unit residential apartment building. The building reopened in 2005 and stands today as a tangible symbol of the revitalization of Lower Manhattan. (For detailed information on the restoration work, see Section 8 – Statement of Significance and photographs of the process in Additional Documentation.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 3

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

Building exterior¹

The 23-story building fills the entire lot on the first floor with the exception of recessed entries on West Street and Cedar Street. It is roughly C-shaped in plan above, with a one-story addition located at the base of the light court. The street facades are nine bays wide on West Street, seven bays on Cedar Street, and six bays on Albany Street. The east elevation has two wings enclosing a twenty-one-story tall light court, with four bays on the southern wing and two bays on the northern wing. The facades are organized in a modified version of the familiar tripartite configuration of many early- twentieth-century tall office buildings. The three-story base of the building is clad in Fox Island granite set on a polished Fox Island granite water table; the upper stories or shaft of the building are clad in beige-colored glazed architectural terra cotta. The building's top portion is more elongated than the traditional "capital" of early skyscrapers, with a four-story crown topped by a three-story dormered mansard roof clad in standing-seam copper. The existing windows are one-over-one aluminum replacements. The original storefronts at the base of the building were constructed of cast-iron; replacement storefronts, installed over time, are constructed of wood or aluminum, matching the profile and configuration of the historic storefronts.

The street façades are symmetrically arranged with single end bays flanking double bays at the center of the façades. Engaged granite columns are located at the corners of the street facades. The bottom two floors are arranged as a two-story arcade, separated by a bracketed cornice from a transitional third story. The second-story cornice incorporates inlaid marble panels between the brackets; these panels have alternating black diamond-shaped panels and white quatrefoil-shaped panels, each set within red marble panels. This cornice projects slightly above the West Street and Cedar Street entrances, where it incorporates carved American Indian heads and carved bases for cast-iron lamps (removed at an unknown date). A second cornice separates the base from the twelve-story midsection at the third story. This terra-cotta-clad midsection is characterized by clustered piers flanking punched window openings separated by recessed spandrels. Another transitional story separates the midsection from the four-story crown of the building, above which rises the three-story copper mansard roof.

The main building entrances are located in the center bay on West Street and one bay off center (to the west) on Cedar Street. The entries have two-story projecting semi-elliptical arches outlined with foliate moldings. The chamfered voussoirs of the arches are inset with alternating marble panels in contrasting green and black colors. Slender engaged pink-marble columns with foliate capitals flank the entrance. Foliate bosses and tracery adorn the arch spandrels. A winged owl adorns the keystone on West Street; a winged eagle, the keystone on Cedar Street. The recessed entrance infill at West Street is a non-historic bronze revolving door with flanking

¹ The exterior description of the building is excerpted from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report LP-1984, "West Street Building," (May 19, 1998).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 4

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

single-leaf bronze doors. The entrance at Cedar Street is set flush with the building line and consists of non-historic aluminum entry doors with aluminum mullions above recalling the Gothic tracery of the historic entries.

The storefronts, constructed of cast iron, wood or aluminum, are set within two-story segmental arched masonry openings. The storefronts on Cedar Street and West Street are set above low granite bases; the storefronts at Albany Street are set directly on the sidewalk. The storefronts and infill above have a tripartite composition, with two narrow bays flanking a wider central bay. The first floor of the storefront openings contains show windows separated by concave-profile mullions, set below louvered transoms. Above the transoms, two rows of tripartite spandrel panels are separated by a denticulated cornice. The windows at the second story are double-hung aluminum flat-headed windows set behind arched cast-iron or aluminum window frames; the windows are divided into a tripartite arrangement by original cast-iron or replacement aluminum mullions. A glass and metal marquee dating to 1987 is located above the West Street entrance; a similar marquee above the Cedar Street entrance was demolished on September 11, 2001.

The third story of the street facades is a transitional story between the granite base and the terra-cotta midsection. This story has granite panels flanking paired square-headed window openings with carved foliate bosses at the corners of the windows. The end bays have single square-headed window openings with more elaborate surrounds with pilasters supporting carved granite heads and carved granite Gothic tracery at the window heads. The bays above the West Street and Cedar Street entries are flanked by more elaborate panels with carved Gothic tracery. Spalled granite lintels on Cedar Street and West Street are the result of heat from the fires that burned inside the building on September 11, 2001. A band of inlaid marble panels is located between the top of the third-floor windows and a projecting cornice with foliate molding. This cornice projects slightly below balconies that are located at the paired windows on the three street facades. The cornice incorporates carved lion heads at the corners of the projecting balconies. One-story tall engaged columns are located at the corners of the street facades.

The midsection of the building follows the composition of the base, with single end bays flanking paired window bays between. Clustered piers rise the full twelve stories of the midsection between the paired sets of windows. The window pairs are separated by attenuated engaged colonettes that are in turn capped by foliate capitals at the fifteenth story. At the fifteenth floor, the molding of the paired window surrounds terminates in a foliated arch above each window. This bay terminates in a three-point arch decorated with green-glazed foliate bosses at the haunches of the arches and blue-glazed terra-cotta panels at the arch spandrels. Terra-cotta eagles are set below the point of the arches, between the foliate arches of the window heads. Recessed terra-cotta spandrels with inlaid black-glazed terra-cotta inserts

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

separate the windows the fourth and fifteenth floor. The projecting fourth-floor balconies have iron pipe railings.

A wide molding with inset foil panels forms the lower section of the cornice that separates the fifteenth and sixteenth floors. This molding incorporates stylized shells that cap the central tracery of the vertical piers separating the window bays below. A continuous acanthus molding caps the cornice between the fifteenth and sixteenth floors.

The sixteenth story is another transitional floor, separating the midsection from the crown. The windows at the sixteenth floor have individual molded surrounds with foliate arches. The panels between the paired sets of windows have colonettes that rise to projecting vines to form capitals. The colonettes flank a central panel with a yellow-glazed background and a foliate boss supporting an urn. The cornice between the sixteenth and seventeenth floors consists of a bracketed lower band topped by a running band of acanthus leaves. Polychrome panels consisting of yellow diamonds set against a red background are set in the metopes of the lower cornice band. At the piers between the paired windows the cornice projects to form a triangular hood above the urns at the sixteenth floor. The hood is carried on the viniform colonette capitals at the sixteenth floor; the lower band of the cornice contains trefoil insets at these projections, while the upper acanthus-leaf band continues through the triangular projections. Terra-cotta owls are set atop the triangular hoods, in front of the acanthus-leaf band.

The seventeenth through the nineteenth floors form the lower part of the crown of the building. These floors are treated as a single three-story window arcade with highly decorated three-center arches. The chamfered voussoirs of the arched openings are decorated with projecting quatrefoil medallions with shell bosses at the center. Glazed terra-cotta vines run along the voussoirs between the medallions. Between the window bays are projecting three-story colonettes accented by vertical foliate moldings. The spandrels of the arches contain foliate tracery. The terra cotta of the arches, voussoirs, moldings and spandrels are richly colored in yellow, green and blue glazes.

Single replacement aluminum windows are set between terra-cotta spandrels at the flanking bays of the seventeenth through nineteenth floors. The central arches contain tripartite replacement aluminum windows with sheet-copper mullions and paneled sheet-copper spandrels.

Above the arches, a band of alternating red diamond and quatrefoil panels set against black squares spans the façades between projecting bases carried by the colonettes below. A continuous acanthus-leaf band runs atop this lower band, forming the cornice below the twentieth story. The projecting bases carry terra-cotta griffins that separate the bays of windows at the twentieth floor. The flanking bays of the twentieth story contain paired windows, while

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

the central bays contain triple windows; a continuous foliate-arched screen with suspended pendants runs the length of the facades above the twentieth story. Canopies with blue-glazed panels are set behind this screen behind the griffins. The cornice above the arches contains a lower band of acanthus leaves alternating with gargoyles and an upper coved-profile band. Clusters of green-glazed vine decorations are set in the spandrels between the arches of the screens, below the gargoyles on the cornice above.

The twenty-first story is comprised of a series of ornate polychrome-glazed dormer screens with shallow projecting balconies between the dormers. The copper-clad mansard roof rises behind this parapet screen. Dormers are set within the mansard roof at the twenty-second and twenty-third stories. The dormers at the twenty-third story have triangular copper or fiberglass hoods. The mansard roof is installed over polygonal-profile battens that give the appearance of a standing-seam roof. The mansard roof is topped by fiberglass icicle cresting and a decorative fiberglass parapet railing, matching the historic railing. The top of the mansard is a flat roof of built-up bituminous roofing with bulkheads and mechanical equipment.

The east façade of the building is comprised of two projecting wings that form a light court. The court has four bays on the south wing and two bays on the north wing. The light court facades retain the treatment of the primary facades, but primarily in buff-colored brick with terra-cotta accents. Below the sixteenth floor, the windows have square-headed openings with splayed terra-cotta lintels and terra-cotta sills. A bracketed bandcourse sets off the transitional sixteenth story. The seventeenth through twentieth stories form the crown of the light court facades, and are treated in a similar fashion to the primary facades, with a three-story window arcade containing triple and double windows set within a sheet-copper surround. Polychrome terra-cotta panels are used as accents throughout the upper stories of the light court facades.

Building interior: lobby

The main building lobby is T-shaped in plan, with a seven-bay-long corridor extending south from an entry on Cedar Street; at the fourth bay it extends two bays to the west to connect to the West Street entrance. Along the east wall, a shallow arched bank of five elevators is centered on the West Street entrance.

The main entrance to the building is at West Street. A non-original bronze revolving door with two single-leaf side entries is recessed within an exterior entrance vestibule. A glass transom is located above the entry doors; visible above this transom is the steel structure for a non-original entrance canopy. The north and south walls of the vestibule are faced in marble, replicating the original configuration. Beyond the revolving door is one bay of interior lobby which forms the West Street lobby. This bay contains arched openings on the north and south wall, with decorative metal storefronts set within the arched openings. Doors within these openings

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

historically led to the retail spaces beyond; these openings have been closed off. The ceiling of the West Street lobby is a non-original plaster groin vault, painted white. A concierge desk is located along the south wall of this West Street lobby.

The Cedar Street lobby is a seven-bay-long corridor extending south from the Cedar Street entrance. The northernmost bay of the Cedar Street lobby is set at an angle to the lobby itself. The west wall of the Cedar Street lobby contains six arched openings. Bays 2 through 4, 6 and 7 contain decorative cast-iron storefronts within each opening; bay 5 is an arched opening leading to the West Street lobby. The lower portion of the decorative cast-iron storefront at bay 2 has been removed and replaced with a painted gypsum wallboard wall. The east wall of the Cedar Street lobby contains five arched opening; each opening has a decorative cast-iron grille at the upper portion of the opening with painted gypsum wallboard infill below. The building's five elevators are located within bays 2 and 3, with three elevators in bay 2 and two elevators in bay 3. The southern portion of the Cedar Street lobby currently contains the mail room for the building's residents.

The floor throughout the Cedar and West Street lobbies is marble tile, installed during the 2005 rehabilitation. The ceiling, also installed during this rehabilitation, is a series of painted plaster groin vaults. The original groin arches consist of white-glazed terra-cotta blocks with a yellow-glazed spandrel; green and brown-glazed vines and blue-glazed medallions with decorative rosettes are set within the medallions. As part of the 2005 rehabilitation, portions of the groin arches were rebuilt in decorative cast-stone; these rebuilt arches are painted white with gold-painted medallions. The surrounds of the arch openings are constructed of simple white-glazed terra-cotta blocks.

The cast-iron storefronts have a tripartite composition, with narrow side bays flanking a wider central bay. The lower portion of the storefronts contains vertical piers with infill faience panels (now painted) creating the tripartite arrangement. The openings between the piers contain glazed doors and storefront windows that vary with the width of the arched openings. The storefronts sit on a stone base that is cut down to the floor level for door openings. Above the storefronts is a transom bar containing a lower frieze of blue-glazed faience panels (now painted) set within paired Gothic-arched openings and an upper frieze with projecting antefixae. The paired Gothic arches are set between cast-iron mullions that are characterized by projecting claw ornaments with vertical sconces above. Historically, the sconces contained cast-iron owls, lions and cattle; these ornaments were removed during a previous renovation. The intrados of the arch contains a transom screen with attenuated vertical cast-iron muntins with vertical glazed panels. The transom is divided into three sections horizontally by cast-iron tracery that defines intermediate panels corresponding to the piers in the storefront base below. Most of the glazing at the base and transom has been replaced with mirrored glass, painted metal panels or painted glass.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

The arched openings along the east wall of the Cedar Street lobby have a similar configuration, with slight variations in the details of the decorative cast-iron work. The grilles along this wall, as noted above, only include the transom bar and transom, with the base being plaster infill with elevator and door openings set within. These grilles have a stronger horizontal division than the storefront infill elsewhere in the lobby. The transom bar omits the mullions and sconces of the storefronts, and includes instead acroteria projecting into the transom at the major horizontal divisions. Between these acroteria, the blue-glazed faience panels (now painted) run continuously in groups of five. Within the transom itself, the vertical divisions above the acroteria have more substantial piers which result in smaller glazed panels at these locations.

Building interior: ground-floor commercial spaces

The other ground-floor spaces were originally designed as retail spaces with storefronts opening onto the street and, in some instances, onto the lobby. The original building plans do not show interior partitions, indicating that the retail spaces were intended as speculative spaces to be configured by the retail tenants. The retail spaces have served a variety of tenants throughout the building's history, and as a result, the interiors and the storefronts themselves were altered many times. The interior spaces were badly damaged by fire and were subsequently gutted, leaving no original finishes. The retail spaces have been refinished with poured concrete floors and gypsum wallboard walls and ceilings.

Building interior: upper floors

The upper floors were designed as spec-office space for flexible use. The Cass Gilbert archive at New-York Historical Society contains volumes of correspondence between early tenants and Gilbert's office, discussing suggestions for office layouts, locations of walls and doors, etc. Elevator lobbies were oriented on the east side of the north-south corridor through the center of each floor. The corridor continued east in the wings, and offices were arranged around the perimeter taking full advantage of the many large windows.

The elevator core contains five passenger elevators, serving all floors. As at the first floor, the elevator bank is set on an arc. The remaining portions of the cast-iron elevator screens on the upper floors have been encased in gypsum wallboard walls.

The apartments are finished with gypsum wallboard walls and ceilings and wood floors, with kitchen and bathrooms arranged near the apartment entries. The corridor finishes include gypsum wallboard walls and carpeted floors. A fitness center, constructed in 2005, is located at the second floor at the base of the light court.

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave
- ☐ **D** a cemetery
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by historic American Building Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance:

1905 - 1907

Significant Dates:

N/A

Significant Person:

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder:

Gilbert, Cass

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal Agency

☒ Local Government

☐ University

☒ Other repository: New-York Historical Society

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 1

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

8. Statement of Significance²

Summary

The West Street Building meets Criterion A in the area of commerce as an early-twentieth-century skyscraper which served lower Manhattan's port and railroad interests. The building, one of three major Downtown office buildings in New York City designed by Cass Gilbert, was built in 1905-1907 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 also meets Criterion C as a distinguished and notable work by one of America's most talented and prolific architects. It is a superior example of the tall office building type in New York City after the turn of the twentieth century, and represents an important point in the transition toward vertically-oriented picturesque skyscrapers. Gilbert's 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. Gilbert'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 New York, but its handsome design set it apart, and it won widespread critical acclaim.³ The West Street Building has more recently acquired additional historical importance as a witness to and survivor of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

² Portions of this section are excerpted from Anthony W. Robins, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) Designation Report LP-1984, "West Street Building", (May 19, 1998).

³ Robins, LPC, p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

Development and Use

The West Street Building was completed in 1907 for the West Street Improvement Corporation, a partnership headed by Howard Carroll (1854-1916). The building was alternately called the West Street Building, Coal and Iron Building or the Railroad and Iron Exchange Building, with the latter two names reflecting the tenants of the building and its proximity to the working waterfront along the Hudson River in Lower Manhattan.⁴ At the time of its construction, West Street ran directly along the Hudson River, separated from the water by only the shipping piers, ferry terminals and warehouses that lined the Hudson River on the west side of Manhattan (as a result of landfill and the construction of Battery Park City, the site is now two blocks from the water). The site selected for the West Street Building was in the center of the machinery, coal and iron trades district, and in the midst of other transportation-related businesses, including longshoremen's hotels, freight and ferries stations, and warehouses belonging to railroad and steamship companies.⁵

In addition to heading up the West Street Improvement Company, Howard Carroll was vice president of the Starin Transportation Company, a firm with many river transportation interests, owned by Carroll's father-in-law, John Henry Starin (1825-1909). The West Street Improvement Company, which was founded to develop the West Street Building, included among its investors John Peirce, who served as the building's general contractor.⁶

Early tenants of the West Street Building included the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad Company, which occupied the seventeenth through twentieth floors of the building. From these offices, executives of the company could look down on their operations at both Pier 13 at Cortlandt Street and the Erie-Lackawanna railroad and ferry terminal in Hoboken, New Jersey (Kenneth Murchison, 1907, listed on the National Register).⁷ Most of the building was divided into smaller office spaces, serving smaller companies or local manufacturers and traders in need of office space. These early tenants included contactors (including the John Peirce Company), engineers, machinery manufacturers, railroad supply companies and coal dealers⁸.

Gilbert's design for 90 West Street established a new standard for luxury and opulence in skyscraper design. In a letter to Isaac A. Hopper, Superintendent of Buildings for NYC, dated September 22, 1905, Gilbert wrote that "...the building shall be strictly fireproof, and of the best type of construction throughout....In other words, ...[it will be]...one of the finest offices buildings in New York."⁹ A multi-use skyscraper, the ground floor of the building housed

⁴ Sarah Landau and Carl Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper, 1865 - 1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 321.

⁵ Landau, p. 321; LPC p. 2.

⁶ Landau, p. 321.

⁷ Landau, p. 323; Robins, LPC p. 4.

⁸ "The West Street Building" [advertisement], *New York Times* (24 January 1907), p. 15.

⁹ Cass Gilbert, letter to Isaac A. Hopper, 22 September 1905.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

various retail tenants while the top floor originally contained the "Garret Restaurant," billed as the highest restaurant in the world (a fitting corollary to Windows on the World, formerly located in the north tower of the World Trade Center).¹⁰ Early advertisements touted a rooftop garden connected to the restaurant.¹¹

Part of the opulence of the building was its richly detailed lobby, which featured elegant Gothic ornamentation in cast-iron, terra-cotta and marble. The main entrance lobby off West Street included canvas paintings by F. J. Wiley on plaster groin vaults that depicted a "marine allegory, sketches of quaint old-fashioned ships..., and marine animals and fishes in a color-setting of unusual beauty".¹² Other significant lobby features included molded terra-cotta ribbing and polychrome terra-cotta groin arches, a marble floor, ornamental metal-work surrounding the elevator doors, storefronts and news stand, and brass light fixtures, all of which were designed by Gilbert himself. The richly-detailed main lobby and elevator lobbies added to the opulence of the building, helping it to attract first-class tenants.

Cass Gilbert

Cass Gilbert was responsible for fifteen buildings in New York City, ranging in type and design from the robust Beaux-Arts United States Custom House (1899-1907, a National Historic Landmark) at Bowling Green, to the clean austerity of the Austin Nichols & Company Warehouse (1913) in Brooklyn, to the soaring grace of the F. W. Woolworth Company Building (1913, a National Historic Landmark) with its elaborate Gothic ornamentation. The West Street Building is one of three major downtown office buildings designed by Gilbert in the early twentieth century - the other two are the Broadway Chambers Building (1899-1900) and the Woolworth Building. Together these three office buildings provide a fascinating illustration of Gilbert's developing approach to skyscraper design; in relationship to the prevailing architectural climate, each bears witness to how far ahead of his times he was.

Cass Gilbert was born in Ohio in 1859 and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. He received his architectural training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Following two years of study at MIT, Gilbert traveled briefly in Europe before joining the firm of McKim, Mead & White in 1880. In 1882, Gilbert returned to St. Paul where he established his own practice. Alone and in partnership with James Knox Taylor, Gilbert established a solid practice in St. Paul, designing houses, churches and office buildings in a number of contemporary styles. In 1895, Gilbert won the competition for a new Minnesota State Capitol (listed on the National Register). This building was designed in the popular Beaux-Arts style, a style Gilbert favored for his civic projects. The Minnesota State Capitol project established Gilbert's national reputation, and led to his invitation to enter the competition for the United States Custom House in New York.

¹⁰Robins, LPC, p. 4

¹¹ "The West Street Building" [advertisement].

¹² "Big Modernizing Job in West St. Building," *New York Times* (11 December 1932), p. RE1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

Upon winning the commission for this project, Gilbert moved to New York, where he carried out the second half of his career.

In addition to the Minnesota State Capitol and the United States Custom House, Gilbert designed a number of other significant civic buildings. These included the Georgian Revival style New York County Lawyer's Association Building (1929, listed on the National Register), the West Virginia State Capitol (1931, listed on the National Register), the United States Supreme Court Building in Washington, DC (1933), and the Classical Revival United States Courthouse in New York City (1934).¹³

Architectural Significance

Gilbert's commercial buildings took on a decidedly different appearance from his civic buildings. Through his experimentation with the skyscraper form, Gilbert came to have a lasting influence on the design of tall buildings, taking it away from the horizontal emphasis and Classical composition of base-shaft-capital of the nineteenth century and towards the exuberant and romantic skyscrapers of the 1920s. The West Street Building bridges the gap stylistically and chronologically between Gilbert's classically embellished Broadway Chambers Building (1899-1900) and its neo-Gothic skyscraper, the Woolworth Building (1910-1913)

The West Street Building represents an important transition point in the design of commercial skyscrapers, which is embodied in three of Gilbert's projects, all, coincidentally, within blocks of one another.

The first of these was the Broadway Chambers Building at 277 Broadway, completed in 1900. The Broadway Chambers Building epitomized the base-shaft-capital form popular on early steel-skeleton-frame skyscrapers in New York. This Renaissance Revival skyscraper features a granite base, shaft of brick, and terra cotta "capital", implying a building of masonry construction. The Broadway Chambers was one of the most architecturally successful buildings of this type. The West Street Building has a similar scheme, but drastically reordered the emphasis and proportion of the various parts. The ornate midsection of the building, with its attenuated piers and recessed spandrels, emphasized verticality and expressed the steel structure behind. The tall crown and mansard roof created an oversize capital (which as originally conceived by Gilbert was to have been topped by a five-story tower).

Gilbert's design for the West Street Building was graceful and light in appearance with a richness of detail in its terra-cotta cladding. "Gilbert's choice of the Gothic helped move skyscraper design along towards the tower ideal. In one of the first consistent uses of Gothic detailing on a tall office building, Gilbert took as models both the secular (fifteenth-century

¹³ Adolf K. Placzek, ed, *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architecture* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), Volume 2, pp. 202-204.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 5

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

town halls in Brussels and Leuven, Belgium) and the religious (the tower of St. Rumobld's Cathedral in Mechelen, Belgium), and used the Gothic to emphasize the tower's sheer verticality."¹⁴

His choice of the Gothic style was an important departure, leading away from the Classical vocabulary and composition of earlier tripartite skyscrapers, including his own Broadway Chambers Building. Variations on the Gothic style became Gilbert's preferred style for tall commercial buildings, including the Woolworth Building at 233 Broadway and the New York Life Building (1928, a National Historic Landmark) at 51 Madison Avenue. Together with his rearrangement of the elements of the tripartite composition through the emphasis on the midsection, the soaring Gothic vocabulary emphasized verticality over all else.

The West Street Building was one of the earliest uses of architectural terra cotta as a complete cladding system for a building. The use of terra cotta anticipated Gilbert's design for the Woolworth Building. The original terra cotta for the West Street Building was manufactured by the Atlantic Terra-Cotta Company. The use of terra cotta emphasized the skin-like nature of the façade, and allowed for an efficient yet highly decorative cladding. Terra cotta also allowed Gilbert to introduce a rich interplay of color and form.

The move away from Classical composition, the emphasis on the building's verticality, the use of terra cotta and color, and even the tower that was originally conceived for the building all anticipated elements that Gilbert used in the Woolworth Building. Using elements Gilbert had first experimented with in the West Street Building, the Woolworth Building, which for 20 years was the tallest building in the world, marked the full break from the Classically-conceived skyscraper.

The West Street Building was a significant transitional building in the early history of the skyscraper, coming at a time when architects were experimenting with more picturesque forms and beginning to move away from strict tripartite Classical composition with its horizontal emphasis. The introduction of the Skyscraper Gothic style has been traced to the Florentine Gothic-style New York Times Building (Eidlitz & McKenzie, 1903-1905, altered).¹⁵ The Times Building was an important predecessor in its use of masonry (limestone) at the base, with light-colored terra cotta above. The base of the Times Building was designed in a more traditional tripartite configuration with decoration that emphasized horizontality, but Eidlitz and McKenzie used Gothic elements and attenuated piers to emphasize the verticality of the ten-story tower above. While these features were in place at the Times Building, Gilbert embraced them much more firmly at the West Street Building. The combination of Gothic inspired elements, and the even more attenuated piers of the midsection, emphasized the verticality of his building to a greater degree than the taller Times Building. Gilbert also integrated Gothic elements much

¹⁴ Robins, LPC, p. 4.

¹⁵ Landau, p. 312.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

more seamlessly throughout his composition; the West Street Building bristled with terra-cotta ornament, making the Times Building seem reserved in comparison.

The crowning of the building with a picturesque roof element was a hallmark of many early skyscrapers. While Gilbert's design brought more emphasis to the crown of the building than many earlier designs, his three-story copper-clad mansard roof was certainly well within an accepted mode of design. Pyramidal or mansard roofs were a common element in the New York skyline, and included such nearby buildings as the American Tract Society Building (R. H. Robertson, 1894-1895, listed on the National Register) and the Home Insurance Company Building (Napoleon LeBrun & Sons, 1892-1894). The five-story tower that Gilbert originally envisioned for the West Street building (which may also have been influenced by the tower of the Times Building) was also part of this trend of identifying buildings in the skyline through unique and picturesque roof elements. When the tower was eliminated by Carroll, Gilbert reorganized the upper portion of the building, elongating the crown of the building and emphasizing the three-story mansard roof.

The West Street Building was among the first to bring all of the elements – a clear break from purely Classical decoration, unabashed emphasis on verticality, tectonics that revealed rather than obscured a steel frame, and picturesque roof forms - together into a single design. In this sense, it fit with other contemporary skyscrapers such as the Singer Building (Ernest Flagg, 1908, demolished), Liberty Tower (Henry Ives Cobb, 1909-10, listed on the National Register) and Howell & Stokes design for the Municipal Building (1908, unbuilt). As such, the West Street Building is part of a new direction in skyscraper design, one which led directly to the “great creative period [of skyscraper design] announced by the Woolworth Building and lasting until 1930”¹⁶. In addition to the Woolworth Building, this creative period included icons of the New York skyline such as the Bush Tower Building (1916), the American Radiator Building (Raymond Hood, 1923-24, listed on the National Register), the Chrysler Building (William van Alan, 1928-30, a National Historic Landmark) and the Irving Trust Building (Voorhees Gmelin & Walker, 1931), as well as buildings outside New York, such as Chicago's Tribune Tower (Howells & Hood, 1923-25).

The West Street Building was critically acclaimed at the time of its construction as an important break from past skyscrapers. Architect John Carrère told Gilbert that he thought the building “very fine...if my opinion counts anything I think it is the most successful building of its class.”¹⁷ Gilbert's friend, the painter Edwin Blashfield wrote to comment on the “splendid impression [the] West Street Building makes on one as one comes up the harbor...I didn't suppose a skyscraper could be so picturesque and handsome.”¹⁸ The *Architectural Record* stated that “in mass, in outline, in color, in color, in detail, the building is the work of a master

¹⁶ Landau, p. 323.

¹⁷ John Carrère, letter to Cass Gilbert, 23 June 1907, Cass Gilbert Papers, New-York Historical Society.

¹⁸ Edwin H. Blashfield, letter to Cass Gilbert, 5 August 1907, Cass Gilbert Papers, New-York Historical Society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

mind, the last word in New York Skyscraper architecture.”¹⁹ Years later, critics continued to recognize the significance of the building. At the time of Gilbert’s death, in 1934, Guy Kirkham declared that the West Street Building “showed a consistent and logical and distinctly pleasing handling of structure and material in mass, proportion, color, and detail. It stands today as one of the most satisfying buildings in New York, antedating the zoning laws.”²⁰

Later History

In 1913, the West Street Improvement Co. sold the West Street Building for \$4,500,000 to the American Sugar Refining Co.²¹ In 1923, the building was sold by the American Sugar Refining Company to James Cox Brady in a deal valued at \$7,000,000.²² The building was operated as the Brady Building by the Brady Security and Realty Corporation, and continued to serve tenants from the shipping, coal, railroad and engineering industries. In 1933, Brady commissioned Cass Gilbert to “modernize” the lobby. Among other changes that resulted from this renovation, the original marble floor was replaced with a terrazzo floor, the original cast-iron elevator doors were replaced, original light fixtures were replaced, and the glass panels in the elevator surrounds were replaced with insulated sheet metal.²³

Brady Security and Realty held the building until 1952, when it was sold for \$2,700,000 to Louis Schleifer.²⁴ Between 1952 and 2001, the building changed hands a number times, although it continued to be called the Brady Building for much of this period, and continued to serve a variety of small office tenants. During this time, the building underwent a number of changes. The main lobby was refinished by the mid-1960s, removing or covering over most of the original finishes. The lobby was renovated again in the mid-1980s. As part of these renovations, the original groin vaults were substantially demolished and suspended ceilings were installed, and marble and wood-clad concrete masonry unit walls were constructed in front of the cast-iron storefronts. These later renovations also replaced the original double revolving doors with single revolvers with flanking single-leaf doors, and removed the cast-iron screens at the building line.

The original cast-iron infill was manufactured by Hecla ironworks, of Brooklyn, New York.²⁵ This included entry screens at West Street and Cedar Street (now removed), the storefronts and second-floor infill on the three primary facades, and the interior cast-iron decoration. The

¹⁹ Claude Bragdon, “Architecture in the United States: III. The Skyscraper,” *Architectural Record* (vol. 26, July 1909), p. 96.

²⁰ Guy Kirkham, “Cass Gilbert, Master of Style,” *Pencil Points* 15 (November 1934), p. 548.

²¹ “The Real Estate Field,” *New York Times*, (12 December 1913), p.18. At the time of the acquisition, Horace Havemeyer, the president of American Sugar, had just commissioned Cass Gilbert to design the Austin, Nichols & Co. Warehouse (1913-1914) in Brooklyn.

²² “\$3,500,000 sale on West Street,” *New York Times* (13 April 1923), p.29. The deal between the American Sugar Refining Co. and Brady included \$3.5 million in cash and \$3.5 million worth of real estate in Long Island City.

²³ “Costs were held down,” *The Architectural Forum* (March 1934), p. 21.

²⁴ “Schleifer obtains downtown offices,” *New York Times* (25 May 1952), p. R1.

²⁵ Hecla Ironworks, *Hecla Iron Works from 1876 to 1908* (Brooklyn: Hecla Ironworks, 1908).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 **Page** 8

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

storefronts were altered many times throughout the history of the building. Typically, entries were added or removed to accommodate changes in retail tenancy, and in the process many of the cast-iron elements were replaced in wood. Non-matching bronze and glass entries and storefronts were also installed prior to 2001.

The West Street Building remained a successful office building throughout its life span, with a range of commercial tenants, until 2001. As the shipping industry moved to other areas of New York Harbor and the Manhattan coastline was extended out into the Hudson River with the landfill and construction of Battery Park City, the West Street Building's distinguished roofline has not lost its prominence in the Lower Manhattan skyline.

September 11, 2001

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade almost resulted in the loss of the West Street Building. The façades and roof of the West Street Building were heavily damaged by fire and falling debris in the aftermath of the collapse of the Trade Center towers. At least one worker died in the building when she was trapped inside an elevator. Large portions of the north façade were damaged by falling pieces of the south tower of the World Trade Center. The roof, which had been coated with layers of green paint over time, was damaged by falling debris. Fires burned inside the building for days, igniting the wood underlayment beneath the roof and compromising the integrity of the entire roof system. The fires destroyed much of the interior of the building. The light court acted as a chimney for the fires that burned inside the building, resulting in severe smoke damage and spalled brick. In the aftermath of the attacks, the interior of the building was largely gutted from the second floor up.

Restoration and Rehabilitation

Engineers from Thornton-Tomasetti Group determined not long after the disaster that 90 West Street's superior construction made it a candidate for restoration. Though battered, Gilbert's design had survived significant damage. Fortunately, the building's steel skeleton and thick terra-cotta fireproofing helped to save the building. In areas of the building where some of the terra-cotta fireproofing had been previously removed (before 9/11) exposed steel columns were coated in intumescent paint. The intumescent paint appears to have performed as well as the terra cotta, none of the floors that had the intumescent paint had any fire-related structural damage.

In January, 2003, the partnership of BCRE 90 West Street, LLC, purchased the building and began a full-scale restoration. Financing was obtained through the Historic Preservation Tax Credit program and Liberty Bonds, among many other sources. The building was converted into a 410-unit residential tower with ground floor retail space. The grand opening of the renovated building took place on October 25, 2005.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

During the weeks following the attacks of September 11th, the building was structurally stabilized and weatherproofed. Then the process of damage repair began. The restoration of the exterior of the building required the expertise of many trades, from stone fabricators, to roofers, to terra cotta experts. The restoration involved a complex program of traditional crafts and new technology, from terra cotta and standing seam copper to thin-panel granite and glass-fiber reinforced concrete. (Refer to the Additional Documentation section of this nomination for photos of the restoration process.)

Large areas of granite had to be replaced on the north façade. An extensive search was undertaken to find stone that matched the original granite since the original quarry was no longer active. The new granite came from quarries in Maine near the original Fox Island granite quarries. The massive granite blocks were then shipped to Italy and Canada for hand carving and finishing. Once fabrication was completed, the granite was shipped to Utah where the individual units were assembled onto 15 steel installation frames. From Utah, the panels traveled to New York for installation. The original construction of the façade was a veneer system with most of the granite blocks measuring 12" to 18" thick. The new construction is also a veneer system with granite 3" thick mounted on steel frames.

Over 7,000 individual terra-cotta units were replaced largely on the north façade with smaller replacement areas on the west façade. Casts from undamaged terra-cotta elements were made to match the originals. The replacement terra cotta was made by the Boston Valley Terra Cotta company. Once the clay mix and glaze composition were determined custom molds were created for each terra cotta unit. The terra cotta was handtooled before glazing in a specialized kiln.

The copper mansard roof was replaced in kind and surviving copper hoods were reused where possible while other hoods and decorative details were replicated in fiberglass.

The storefronts on Cedar Street were largely demolished on September 11, 2001. During the subsequent rehabilitation, non-matching bronze storefronts and entries elsewhere on the building were removed and replaced with aluminum storefronts to match the historic cast-iron storefronts.

The interior work was also substantial, given the fire damage and previous renovations that had obscured older features. Throughout the building's history the floor plans and office layouts were changed many times for different tenants. Some of the interior work during the post 9/11 rehabilitation involved discoveries. The lobby finishes had been obscured behind CMU walls. The finishes that were uncovered included intricate cast-iron (storefronts, friezes with decorative terra-cotta faience panels, and transoms at the elevators), terra-cotta arches and ribs, and the remnants of the plaster groin vaults. The cast iron was cleaned and restored, with some

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 10

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

details at the elevator transoms replicated. The plaster groin vaults were replicated (minus the original decorative painting). One rib of the terra cotta was cleaned and left exposed; the rest was repainted. Cast stone (also painted) was used to replicate missing terra-cotta elements.

Historically, the building contained nine elevators, symmetrically arranged along a shallow arch that extended along bays 2 through 4 of the east wall. Four of these elevators were removed during the 2002-2005 rehabilitation. On the upper floors, the interior corridor configuration was reinstated with apartments arranged around the perimeter and light court.

The rehabilitation of the West Street Building has been cited as one of the first steps in the rebirth of the area around Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan.²⁶ The work on the building has garnered numerous awards, and has been cited in many articles as an important symbolic step in the rebirth of Lower Manhattan.²⁷

²⁶ Glenn Collins, "9/11's Miracle Survivor Sheds its Bandages," *New York Times* (5 March 2004).

²⁷ Stevenson Swanson, "Reborn 9-11 Building Gives WTC District New Life," *Chicago Tribune* (1 July 2005); Paul D. Colford, "Braced to Live in Shadows of 9/11," *New York Daily News* (27 June 2005).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

9. Bibliography

- "\$3,500,000 Sale on West Street." *New York Times*. 13 April 1923, p. 29.
- "Big Modernizing Job in West St. Building." *New York Times*. 11 December 1932, p. RE1.
- "Cass Gilbert Papers." New-York Historical Society.
- "Costs Were Held Down." *The Architectural Forum*. Volume 60, March, 1934, pp. 21-22.
- "Modern Office Buildings." *Architects' and Builders' Magazine*. Vol. 8, June, 1907, pp. 413 ff.
- "The Real Estate Field." *New York Times*. 12 December 1913, p. 18.
- "Schleifer Obtains Downtown Office." *New York Times*. 25 May 1952, p. R1.
- "Terra Cotta Buildings: Easily Kept Like New [advertisement]." *Architecture*. August, 1929, p. 35.
- "The West Street Building." *Architectural Record*. Vol. 22, July - December, 1907, pp. 107-109.
- "The West Street Building [advertisement]." *New York Times*. 24 January 1907, p. 15.
- Blodgett, Geoffrey. *Cass Gilbert: the Early Years*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001.
- Bragdon, Charles. "Architecture in the United States III: The Skyscraper." *Architectural Record*. Vol. 26, July, 1909, pp. 84-93.
- Christen, Barbara S. and Steven Flanders, eds.. *Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2001.
- Colford, Paul D. "Braced to Live in Shadows of 9/11." *New York Daily News*. 27 June 2005.
- Collins, Glenn. "9/11's Miracle Survivor Sheds its Bandages." *New York Times*. 5 March 2004.
- Glanz, James. "Wounded Buildings Offer Survival Lessons." *New York Times*. 4 December 2001, p. F1.
- Hecla Iron Works. *Hecla Iron Works from 1876 to 1908*. Brooklyn: Hecla Iron Works, 1908.
- Heilbrun, Margaret, ed. *Inventing the Skyline: The Architecture of Cass Gilbert*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Irish, Sharon. "A 'Machine That Makes the Land Pay': The West Street Building in New York." *Technology and Culture*. Vol. 30, April, 1989, pp. 376-397.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 2

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

Irish, Sharon. *Cass Gilbert, Architect*. New York: Monacelli Press, 1999.

Irish, Sharon. *Cass Gilbert's Career in New York, 1899-1905*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University (dissertation), 1985.

Jones, Robert A. *Cass Gilbert: Midwestern Architect in New York*. New York: Arno Press, 1982.

Kirkham, Guy. "Cass Gilbert, Master of Style." *Pencil Points*. Volume 15, November, 1932.

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

Placzek, Adolf K., ed. *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architecture*. New York: The Free Press, 1982.

Robins, Anthony W. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. *West Street Building*. Designation report LP-1984, May 19, 1998.

Stern, Robert A. M. *New York: 1900*. New York: Rizzoli, 1983.

Swanson, Stevenson. "Reborn 9-11 Building Gives WTC District New Life." *Chicago Tribune*. 1 July 2005.

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

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 9 Page 3

West Street Building
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Verbal boundary description

The nominated property occupies the Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 56, Lot 4. The lot extends 158'-8" on West Street, 119'-9 3/4" on Cedar Street, and 102'-7 1/2" on Albany Street, with an irregular eastern boundary. The boundaries include the entire area of the building lot. Addresses: 87 to 93 West Street, 140 Cedar Street, 21 to 25 Albany Street. The boundaries of the property are indicated on the attached map.

Boundary justification

The boundary of this nomination includes the entire parcel historically and currently associated with the building.

West Street Building
Name of Property

New York County, New York
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 583227 4506808
Zone Easting Northing

3 18
Zone Easting Northing

2 18

4 18

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ward S. Dennis

organization Higgins & Quasebarth

date November 7, 2006

street & number 270 Lafayette Street, Suite 810

telephone (212) 274-9468

city or town New York, NY

state NY zip code 10012

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name BCRE 90 West Street LLC

street & number c/o BCRE USA, 885 Third Avenue, 27th Floor

telephone (212) 308-7200

city or town New York

state NY zip code 10022

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 1

West Street Building

Name of Property

New York, New York

County and State

11. Additional Documentation

List of Photographs

1. West (West Street) façade, looking east.
 2. West (West Street) and north (Cedar Street) façade, looking southeast.
 3. West (West Street) and south (Albany Street) facades, looking northeast.
 4. West Street entry and storefronts, looking east.
 5. West Street entry, looking northeast.
 6. Detail above West Street entry, showing third floor, looking east.
 7. Storefront detail, West Street, looking northeast.
 8. Detail of fire-damaged lintel at 2nd story, West Street façade, looking east.
 9. View of flanking bay, Cedar Street façade, looking up from 2nd floor.
 10. General view of 14th through 21st floors, Cedar Street façade, looking southwest.
 11. Detail of Cedar Street façade, 14th through 16th floors, looking south.
 12. Detail of Cedar Street façade, 14th through 18th floors, looking southwest.
 13. Detail of Cedar Street façade, 19th through 21st floors, looking southwest.
 14. East elevation, looking southwest from Cedar Street.
 15. Mansard roof, 21st through 23rd floors, looking north at north wing of light court.
 16. Main lobby, looking north to Cedar Street entry.
 17. Main lobby, looking south to mailboxes, with salvaged griffin in foreground.
 18. Main lobby, detail of cast-iron screen at West Street lobby, looking northeast.
 19. Main lobby, detail of polychrome terra-cotta medallion at groin arch looking west.
 20. Main lobby, detail of groin arches at lobby transept, looking northwest.
- All photos by Catherine Gavin, 2006.

Original TIFF files held by: Higgins & Quasebarth, 270 Lafayette Street, Suite 810,
New York, NY 10012

Visual images and text from the Excellence in Historic Preservation Nomination Form 2006
submitted by Peter Levenson, RA, to the Preservation League of New York State.

Power Point Presentation of 90 West Street

Print-outs of the visual images from this presentation are attached to the nomination. They include historic images and drawings; images showing the damage from the attacks of September 11, 2001; and images of the restoration process.

STREET

IRREGULAR WIDTH

WEST

LIBERTY

38

ST

CEDAR

ST

ALBANY

THE MARRIOTT HOTEL

SCARLISLE

LOADING

OFFICES

FLS ONLY

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

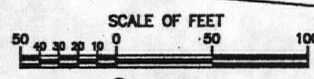
STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET



© 2005 SANBORN

COPYRIGHT © SANBORN
MAPPING & GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SERVICE

THIS SANBORN MAP IS A CERTIFIED COPY
 PRODUCED BY SANBORN FROM ITS ARCHIVES.
 INFORMATION ON THIS MAP IS DERIVED FROM
 SANBORN FIELD SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN:

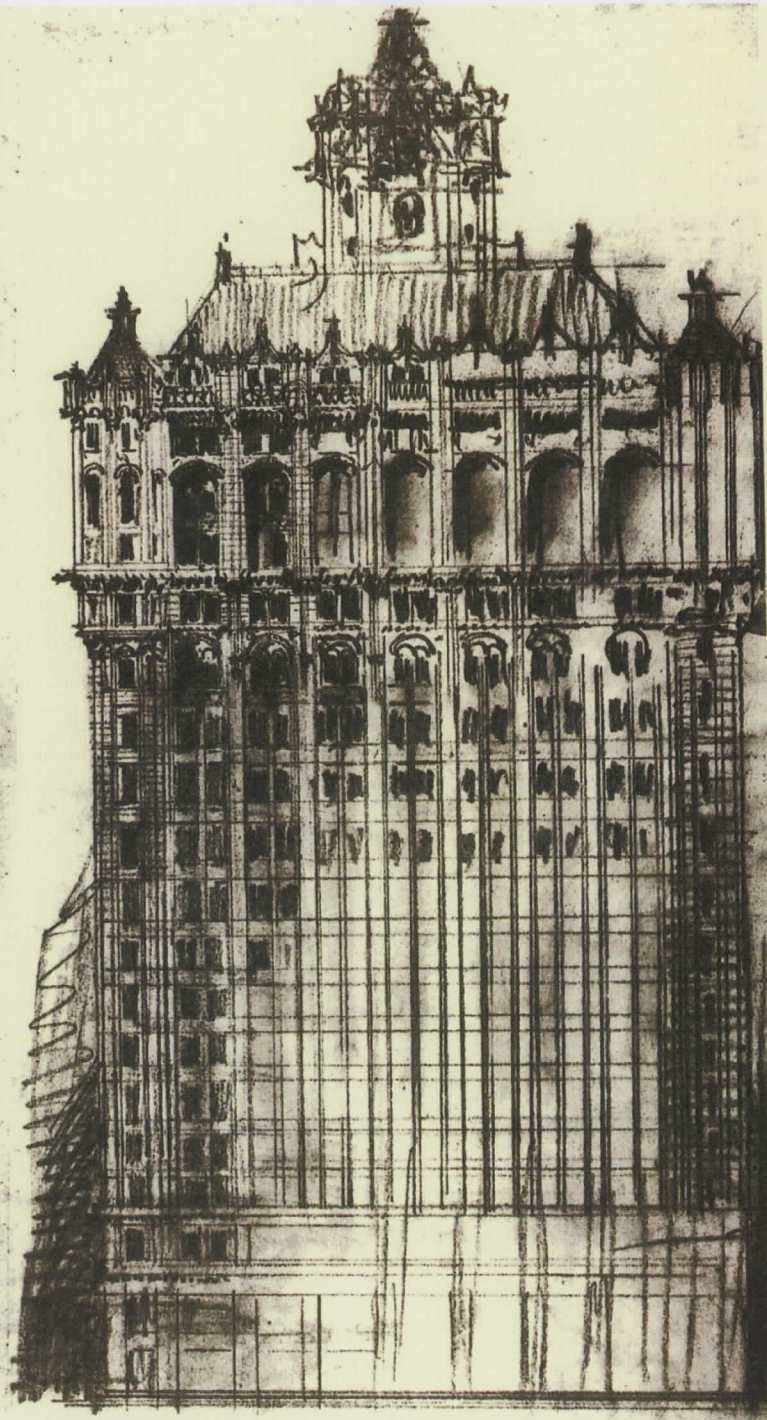
2005
 (year)



West Street Building
 90 West Street
 New York County, NY

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 56, Lot 4
 Boundary indicated by dark line
 Scale: 1" = 100'
 Sanborn Map, 2005

90 West Street
1907











90 West Street
2001















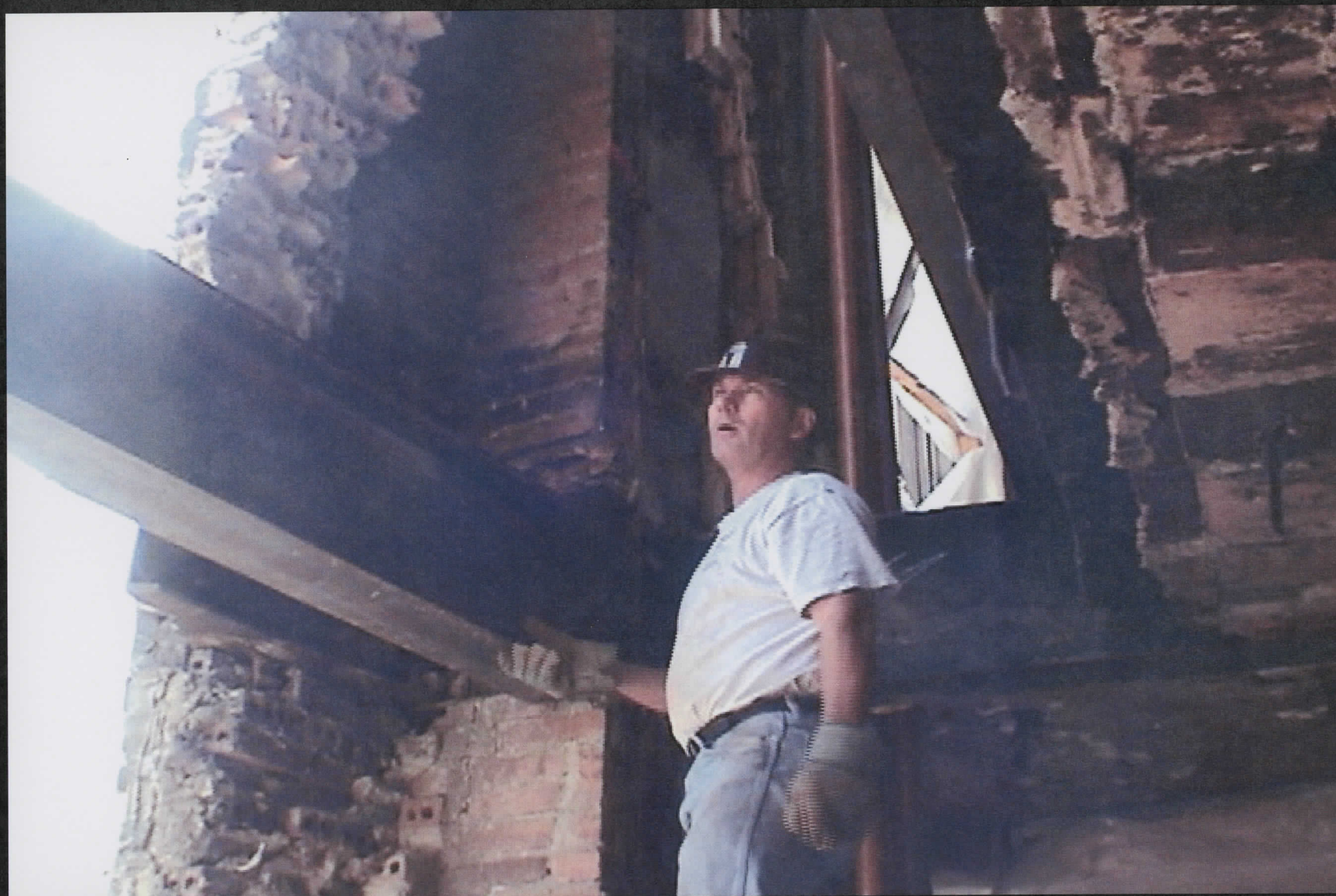




Structural Infill

2004

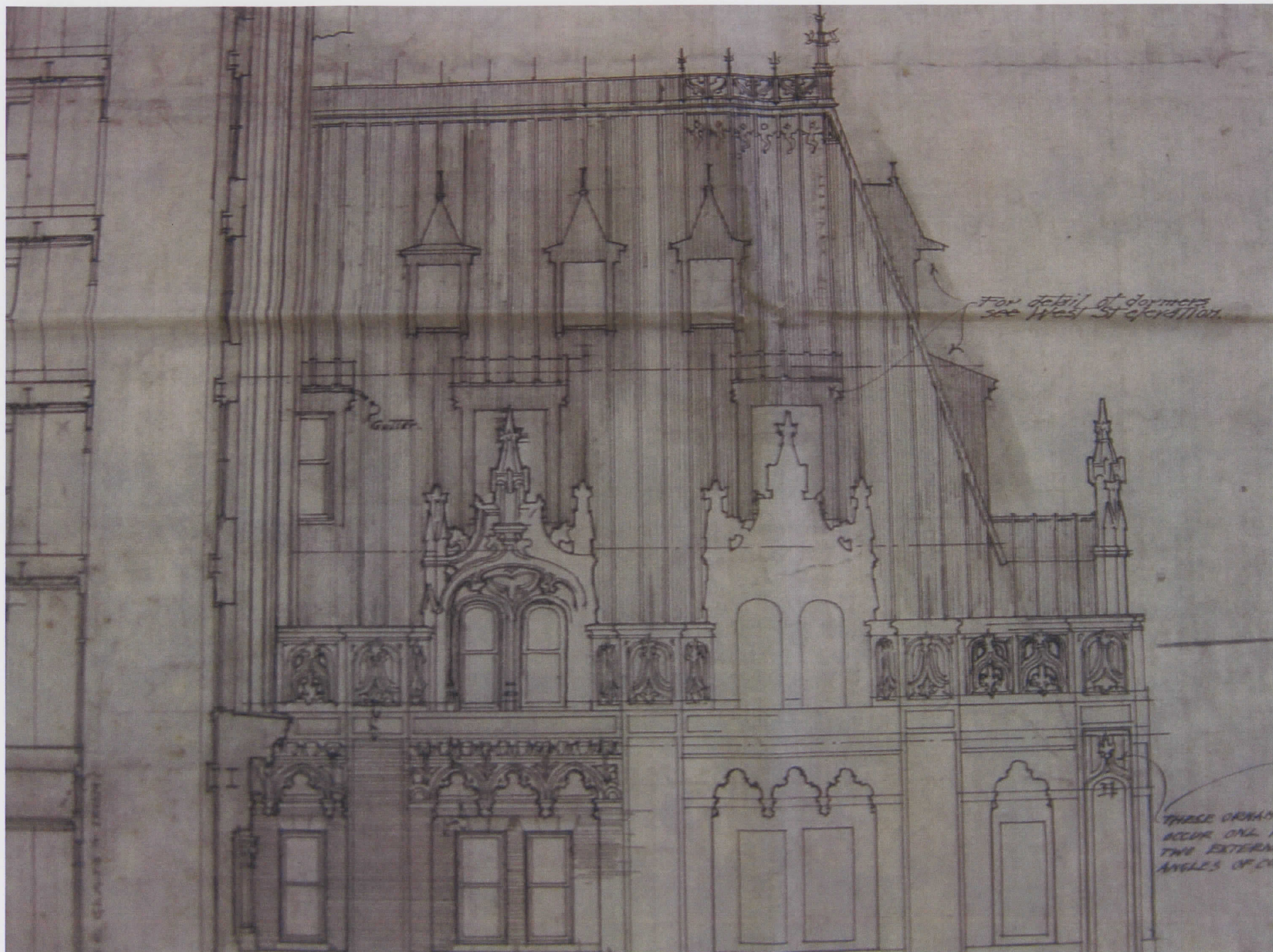








Mansard Roof



For detail of dormers
see West St elevation

THESE ORNAMENTS
OCCUR ONLY IN
THE EXTERIOR
ANGLES OF CORNERS











Lobby















Terracotta Fabrication

FED
INS
COMPANY

LEED
STENHOUSE

PRISON
ST

UNION COUNTY
COURT HOUSE



D JONES
(BLUE - L.A.S.)

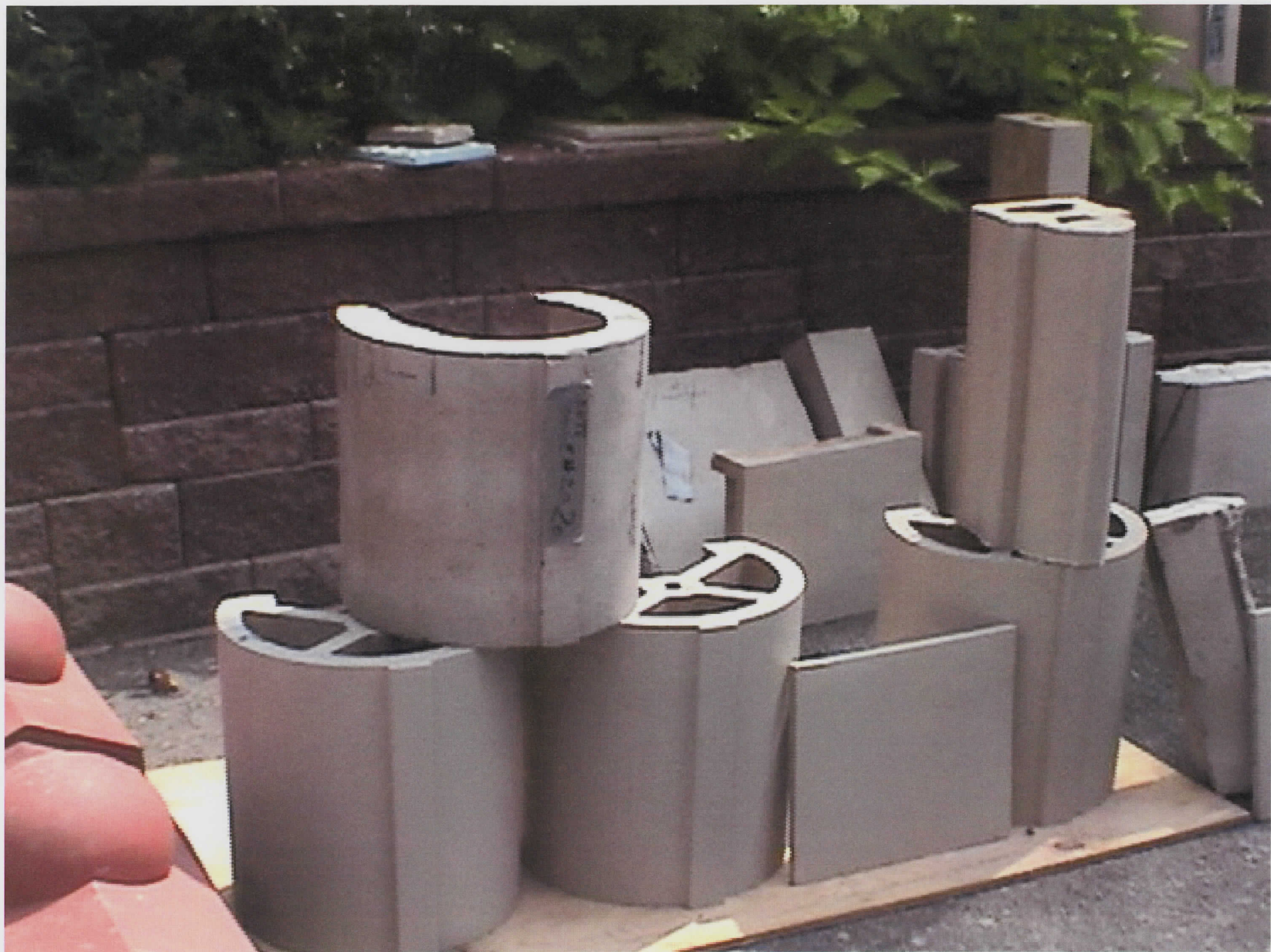
19
SHORE

90 WEST COMPTON

Handwritten notes on a separate sheet of paper, including "FREE TIME" and "COMPTON".

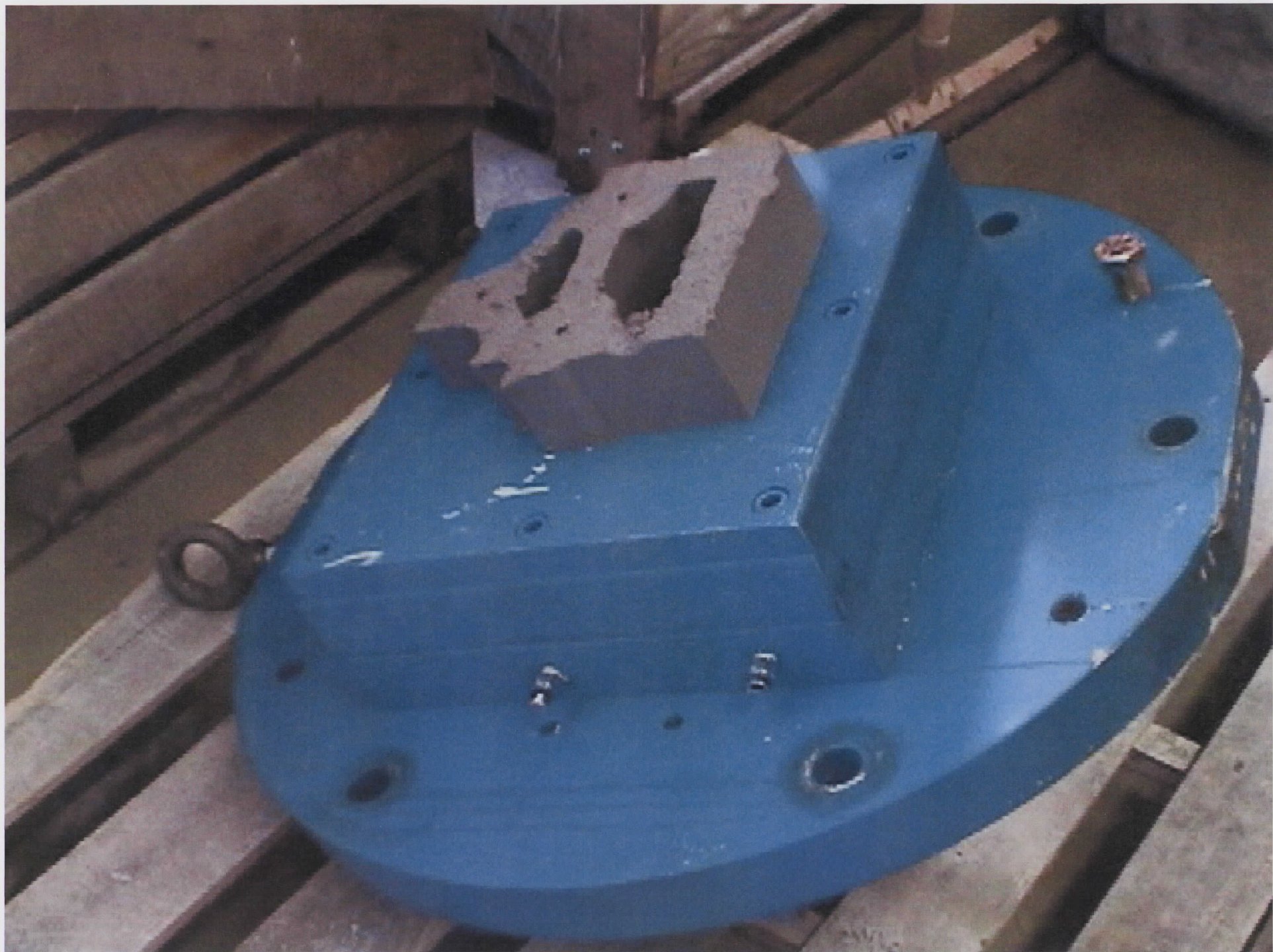


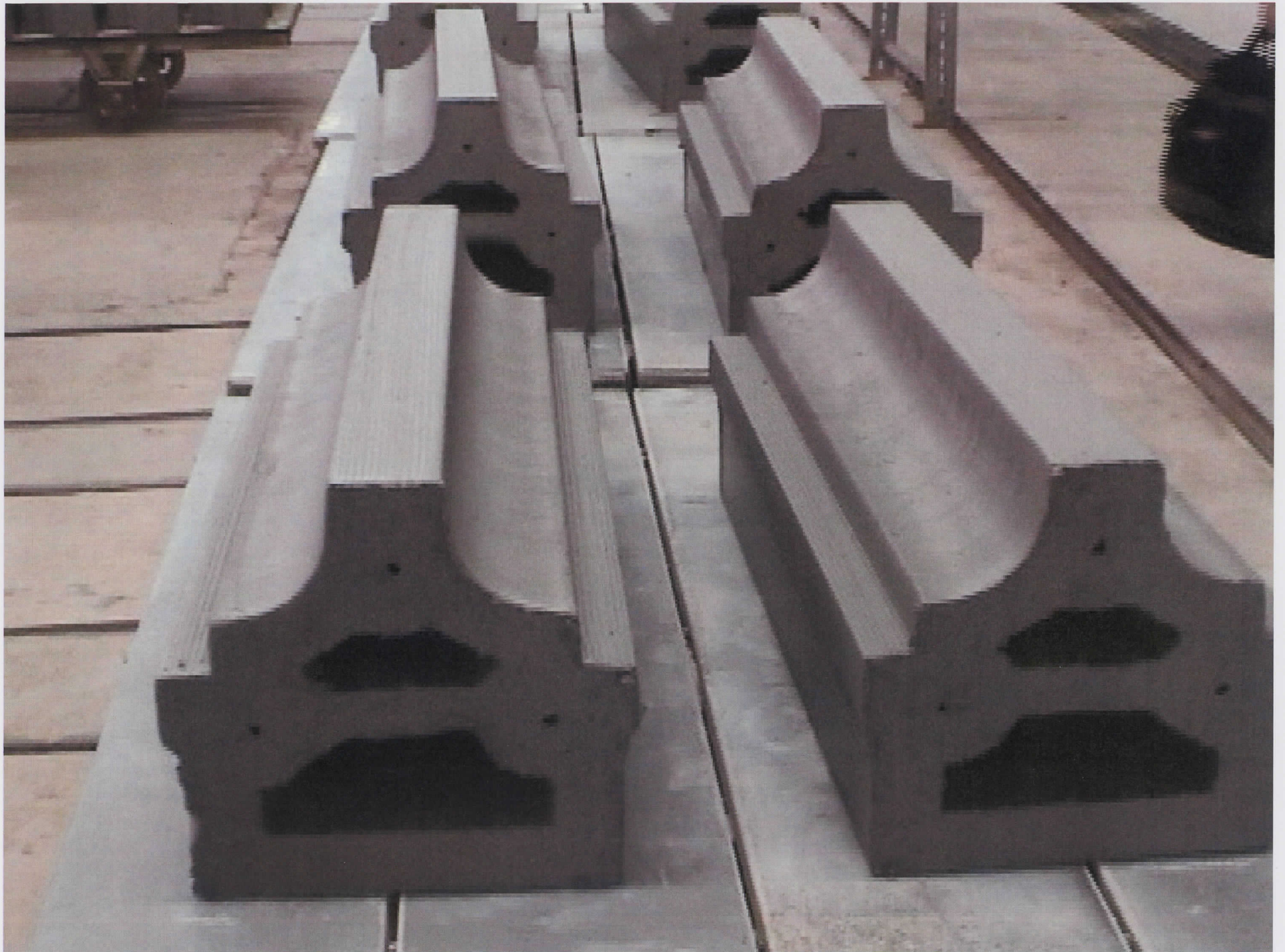






















Terracotta Installation



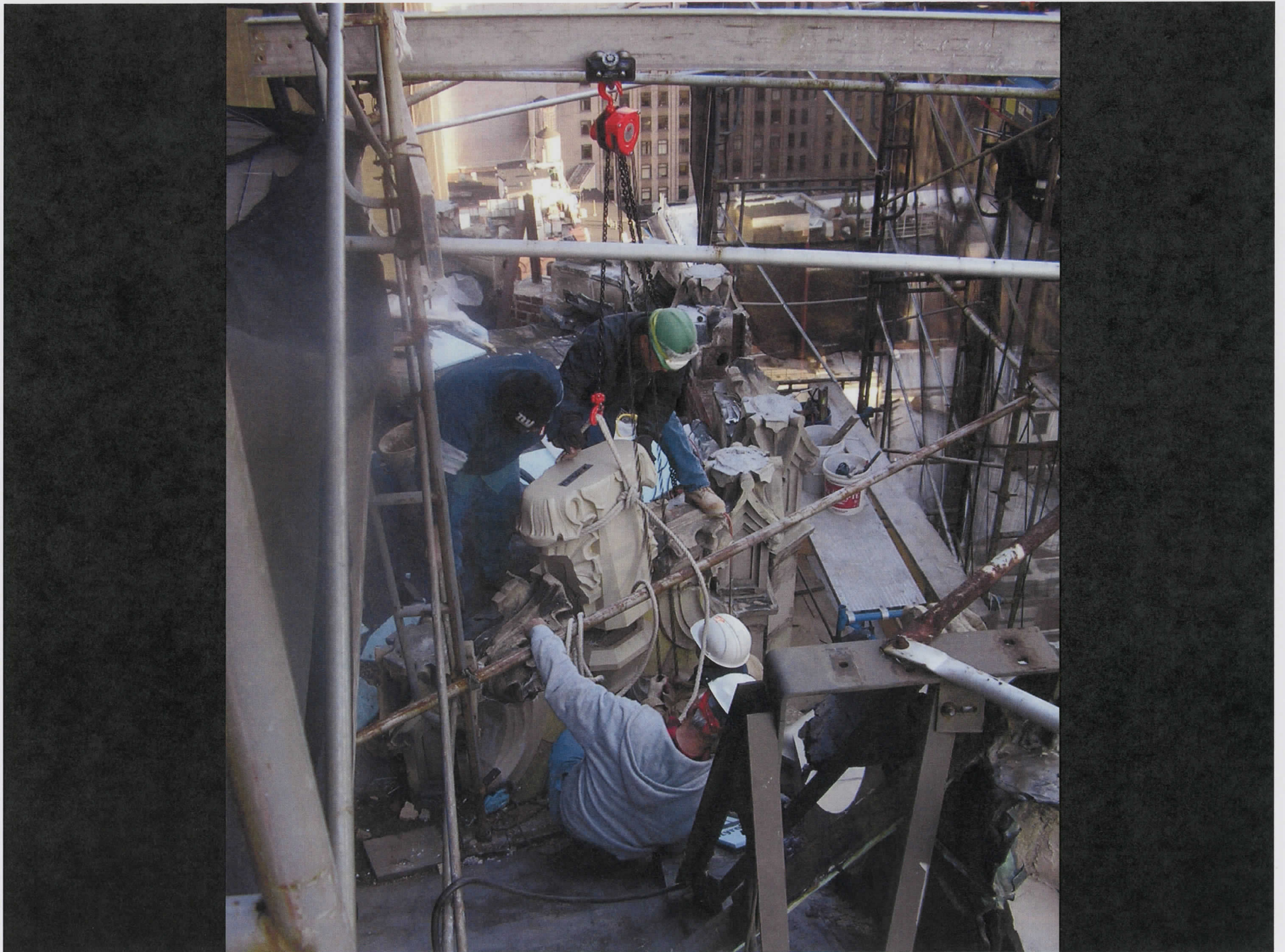




























Granite Restoration









Granite Fabrication















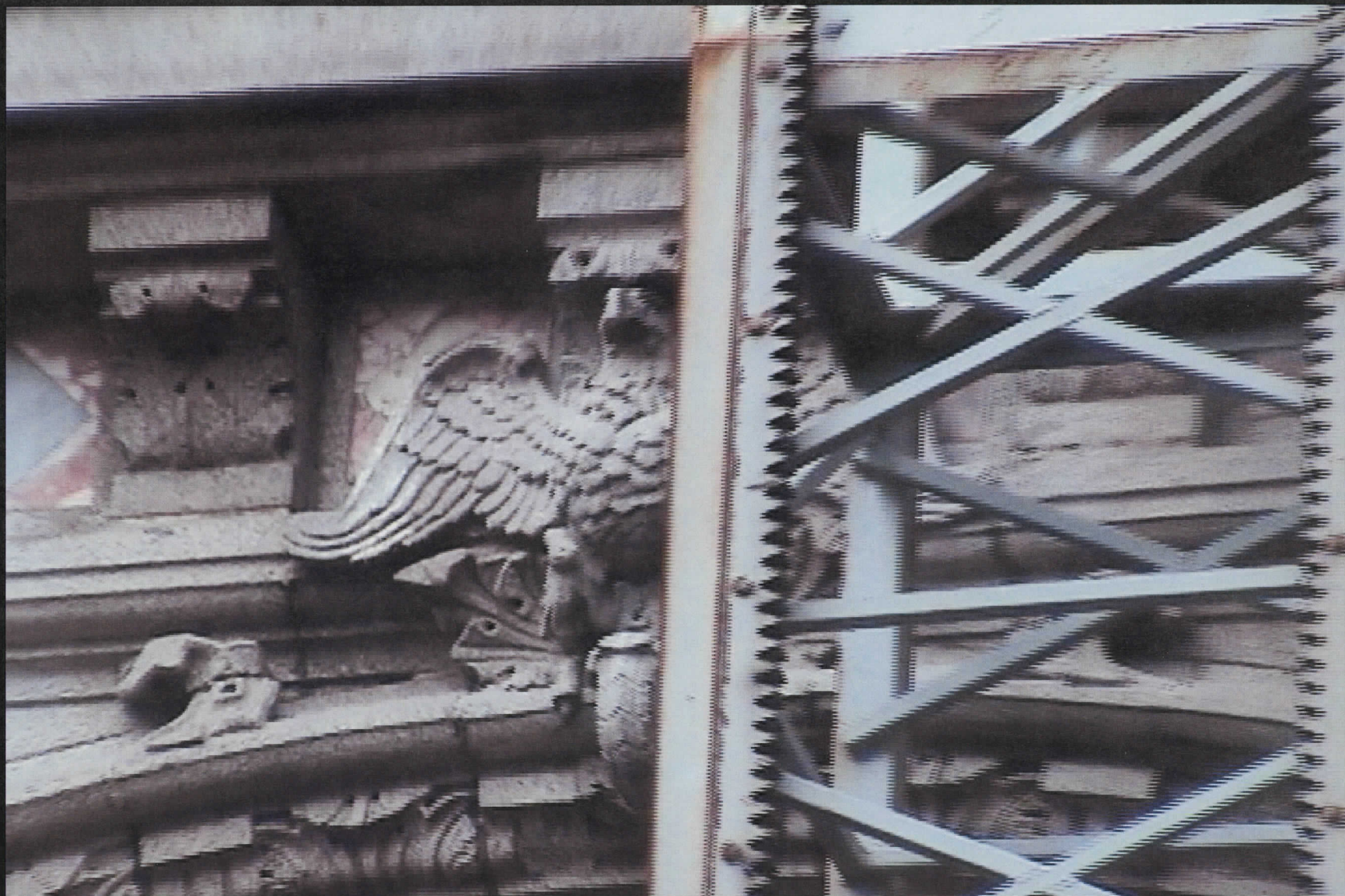


Granite Disassembly



















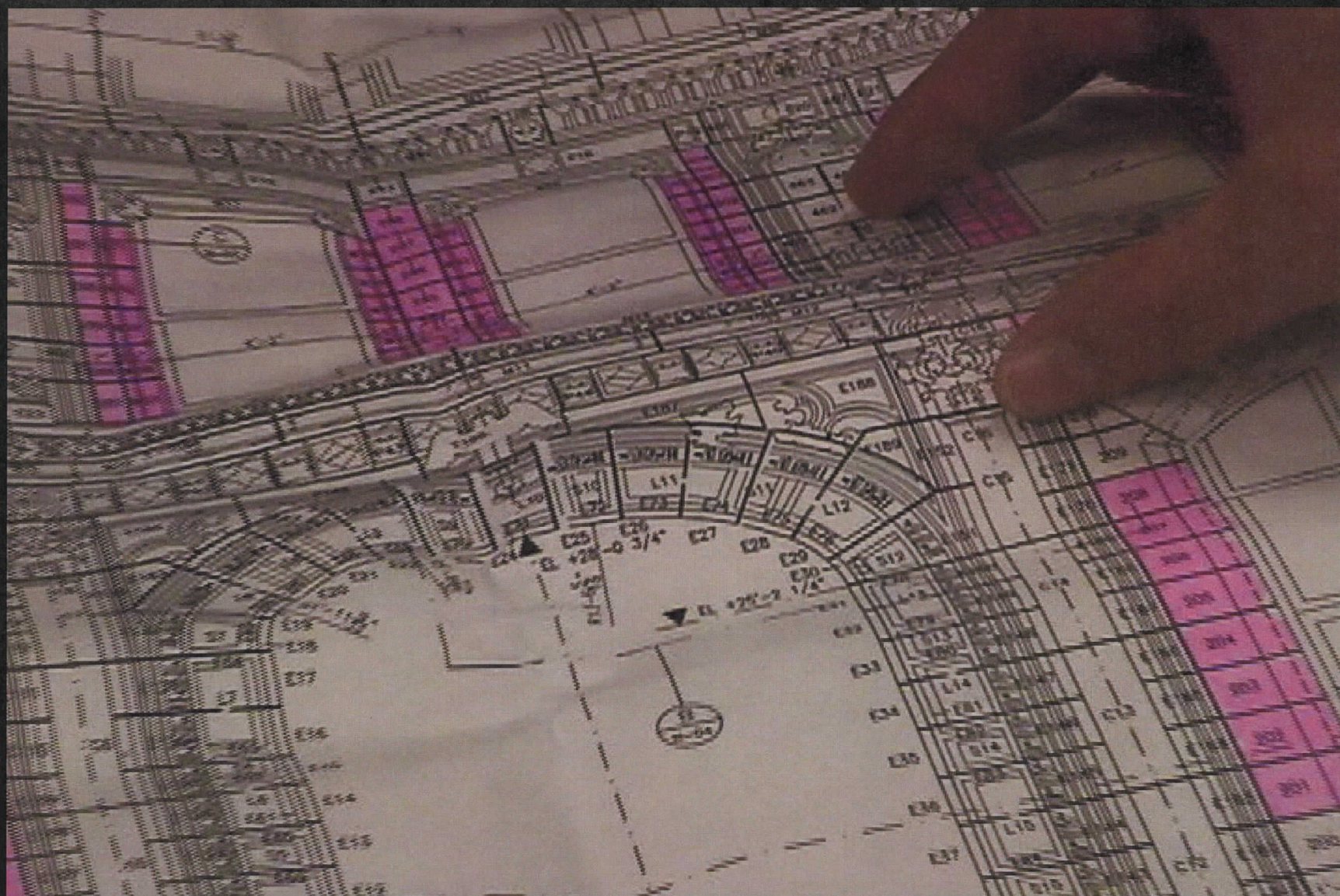








Granite Fabrication *Canada*







-1720 mm

-1720 mm

-53 °

-53 °

1696 mm

0.0 °

ss time:

2:49

ction:

0.07 m²/h

speed:

8 cm/h

speed:

8 cm/h

one:

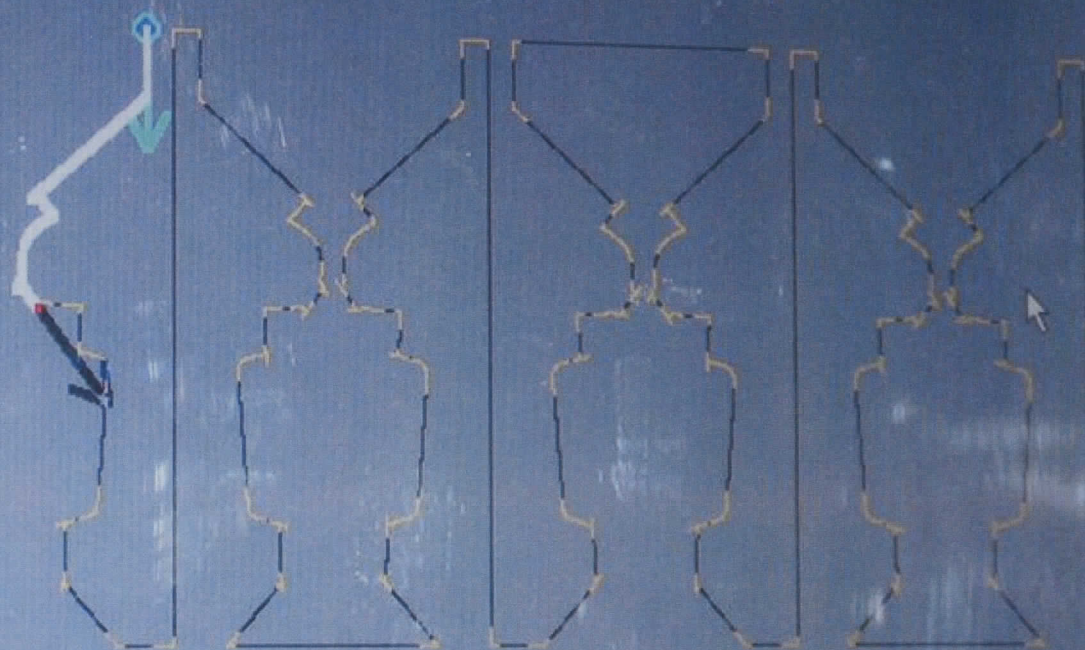
0 / 1

Invert direction

No

Max production

0.50 m²/h



10.24.2004





11.04.2004





10.12.2004



Granite Fabrication

Utah



From: BOTTEGA VERLIEBE
Via: 10100 10100 10100 10100
U.S. & C. 10100 10100
10100 10100
HOLBROOK, N.Y. 10100
PH. 10100 10100
BOX
mark B.V.
MADE IN ITALY





















KEEP COOL

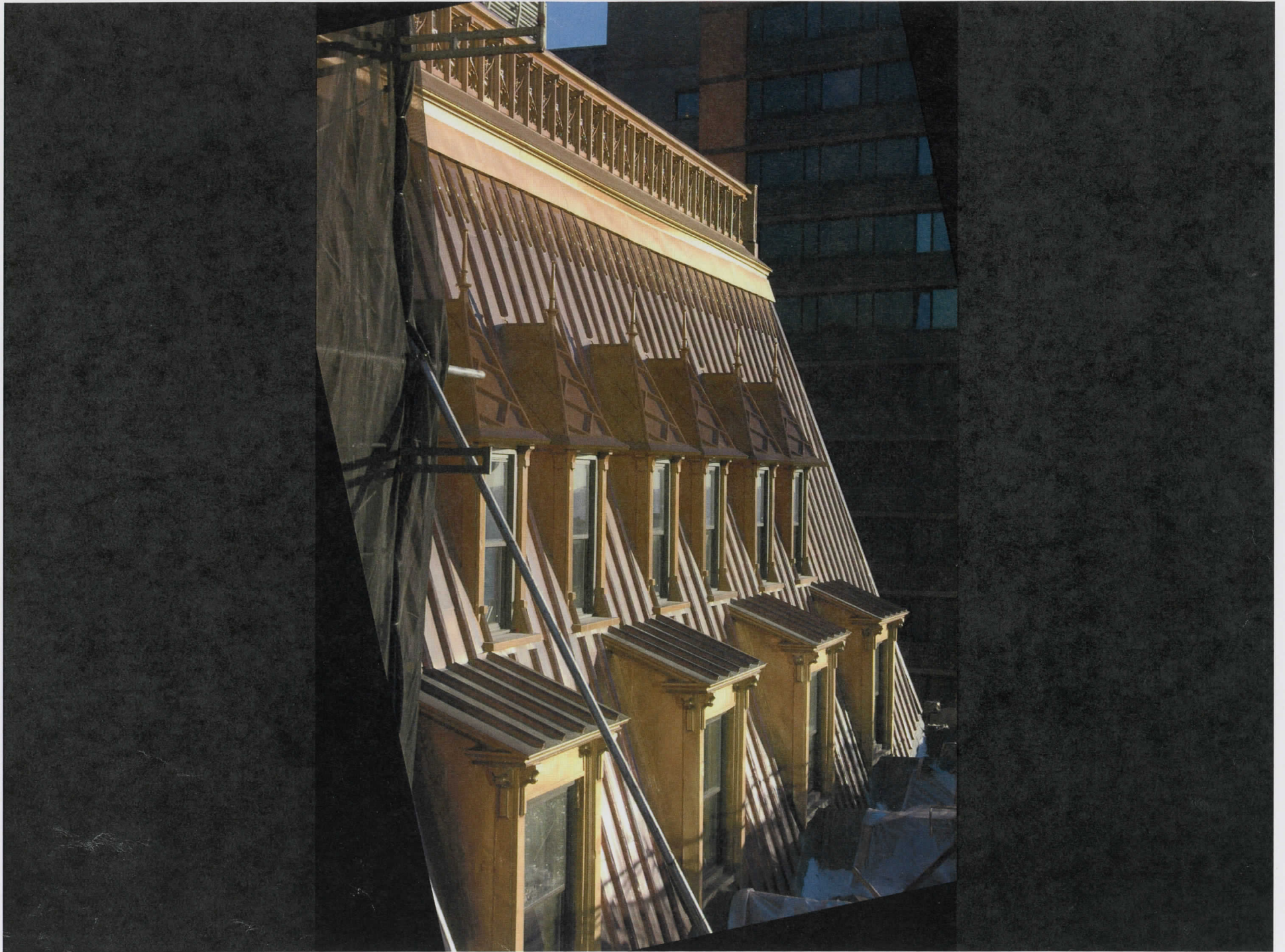


Unwrapping
New York











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY West Street Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, New York

DATE RECEIVED: 12/12/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/05/07
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/20/07 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/25/07
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06001303

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 1.25.07 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



West St Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 1



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 2



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 3



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 4



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 5



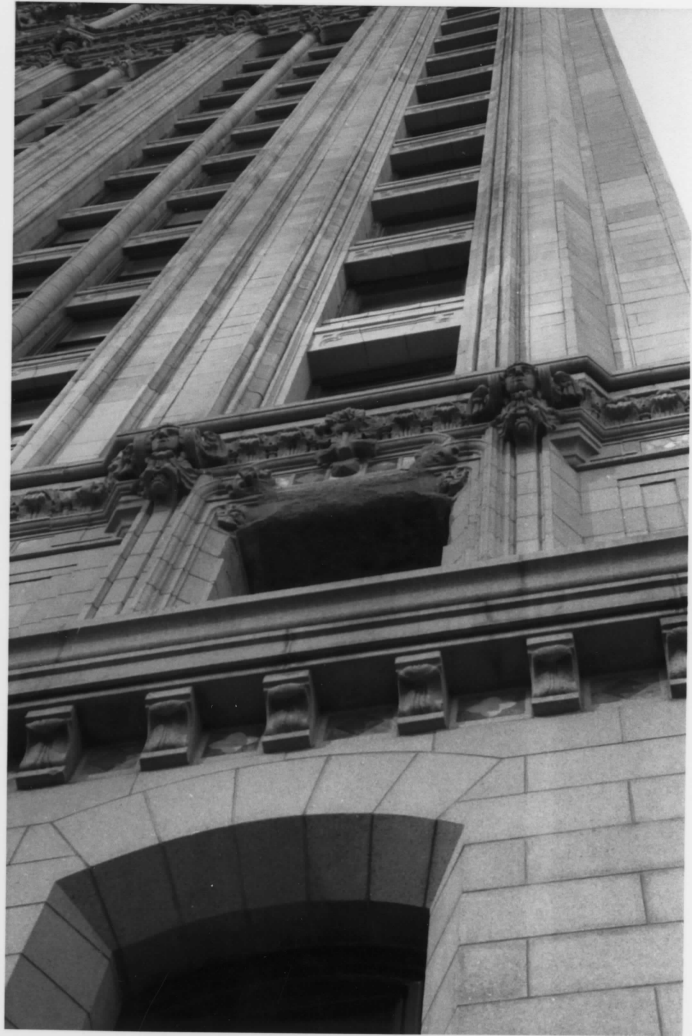
West. St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 6



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 7



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 8



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 9



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 10



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 11



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 12



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 13



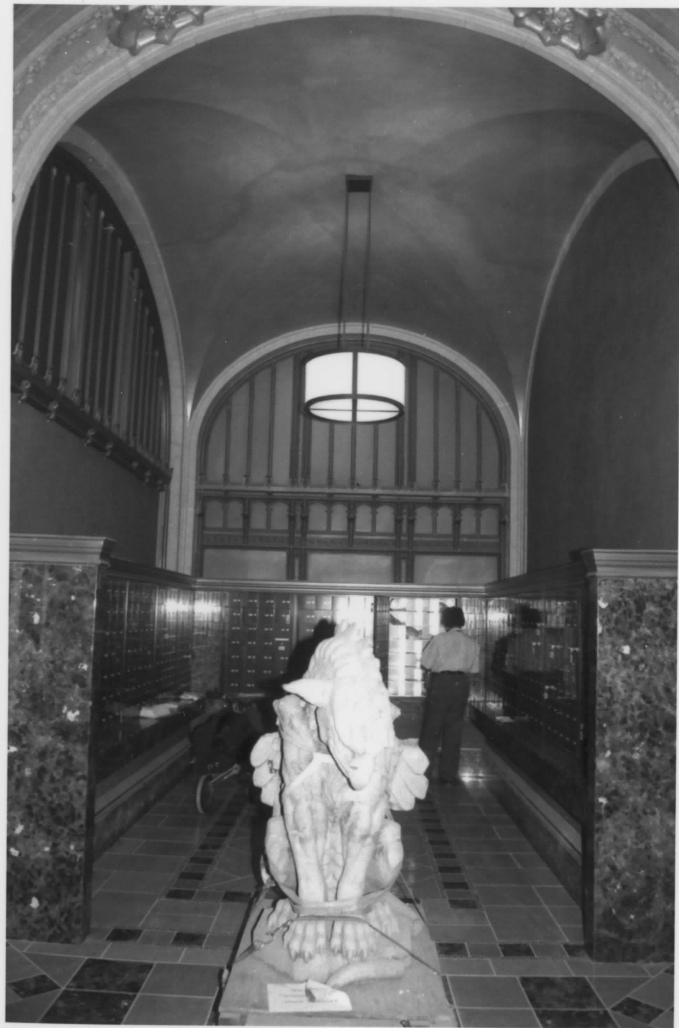
West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 14



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 15



West St. Bldg
New York (NY)
Photo 16



West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 17



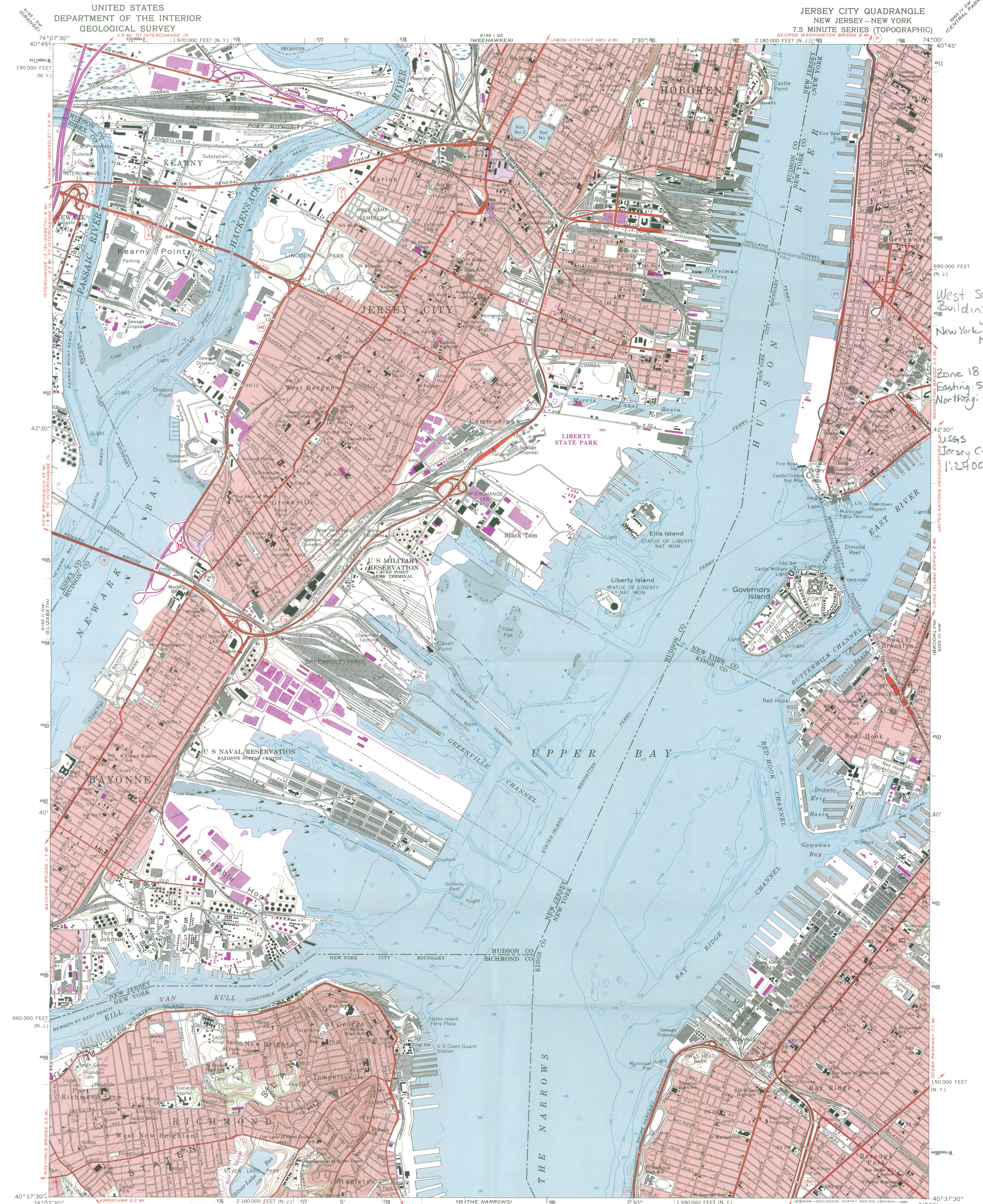
West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 18



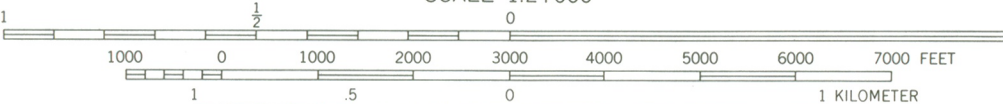
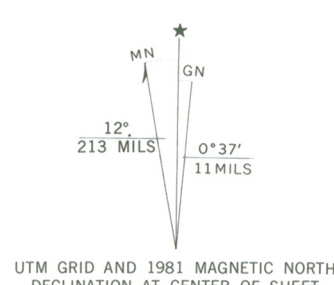
West St. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 19



West st. Bldg.
New York (NY)
Photo 20



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Revised in cooperation with New York Department of Transportation
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, USCE, New Jersey Geodetic Survey,
and City of New York Board of Estimate and Apportionment
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods and from NOS charts T-5111,
T-5277, T-5332, T-5450, T-5453, T-5454, T-5460, T-5461, T-5466,
T-5469, and T-5470
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken
1954 and planimetric surveys 1955. Revised from aerial photographs
taken 1965. Field checked 1967
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 285, 287, 541,
and 745 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Polyconic projection, 10,000-foot grid ticks based on New Jersey coordinate
system, and New York coordinate system, Long Island zone, 1000-meter
Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue, 1927
North American Datum. To place on the predicted North American Datum
1983 move the projection lines 6 meters south and 35 meters west as shown
by dashed corner ticks
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET-DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 4.4 FEET IN
UPPER BAY AND 4.8 FEET IN NEWARK BAY
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface
Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Unimproved road, fair or dry weather
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route

JERSEY CITY, N.J.-N.Y.
N4037.5-W7400/7.5
1967
PHOTOREVISED 1981
DMA 6165 II NE-SERIES V822

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1976 and other sources. This information not
field checked. Map edited 1981
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas





The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

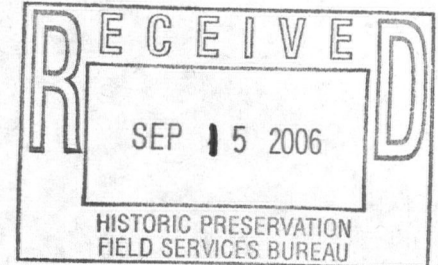
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North, New York NY 10007 TEL: 212-669-7922 FAX: 212-669-7797

<http://nyc.gov/landmarks/>



RONDA WIST
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
rwist@lpc.nyc.gov

September 13, 2006



Ms. Ruth Pierpont, Director
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189
Peebles Island
Waterford, New York 12188-0189

Re: West Street Building, 90 West Street, New York, New York

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

I write on behalf of Chair Robert B. Tierney in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the West Street Building at 90 West Street in Manhattan for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Commission strongly supports the nomination of the West Street Building. On May 19, 1998, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate 90 West Street an individual New York City landmark. The West Street Building, built in 1905-07 for the West Street Improvement Corporation, is one of three major downtown office buildings designed by Cass Gilbert. While the West Street Building was among many office buildings built in Lower Manhattan during the first decade following the consolidation of the City of New York, its handsome design set it apart and won widespread critical acclaim. At the time of designation, its exterior was still largely intact; and it was damaged in the attacks of September 11, 2001; 90 West Street has undergone a great deal of rehabilitation and restoration.

Therefore, based on the Commission's review of the property and the materials submitted by the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, the Commission has determined that the West Street Building appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Sincerely yours,

Ronda Wist

cc: Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Mary Beth Betts

B.C.R.E. - 90 WEST ST, LLC.

B.C.R.E. - 90 West Street, LLC.

885 Third Avenue, 27th Floor • New York, NY 10022 • T 212 308 7200 • F 212 308 1231

November 7, 2006

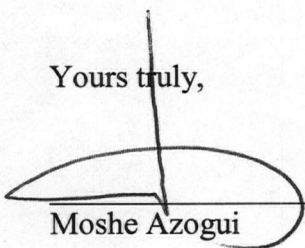
Ms. Kathy Howe
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
Peebles Island
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

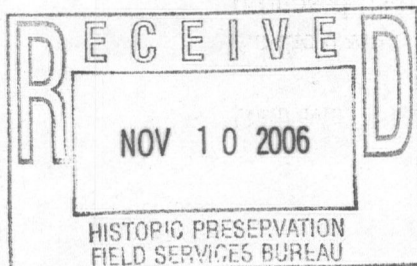
Re: National Register Nomination
The West Street Building
90 West Street
New York, New York County

Dear Ms. Howe:

As the owner of the West Street, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support of the proposed listing of this building on the National Register of Historic Places.

Yours truly,


Moshe Azogui



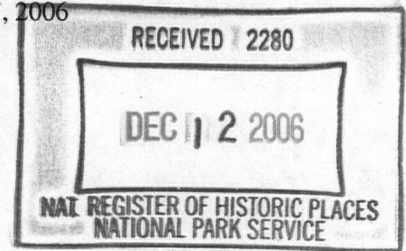


New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau
Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

Bernadette Castro
Commissioner

December 7, 2006



Ms. Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW
8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Transmittal of National Register
Nomination

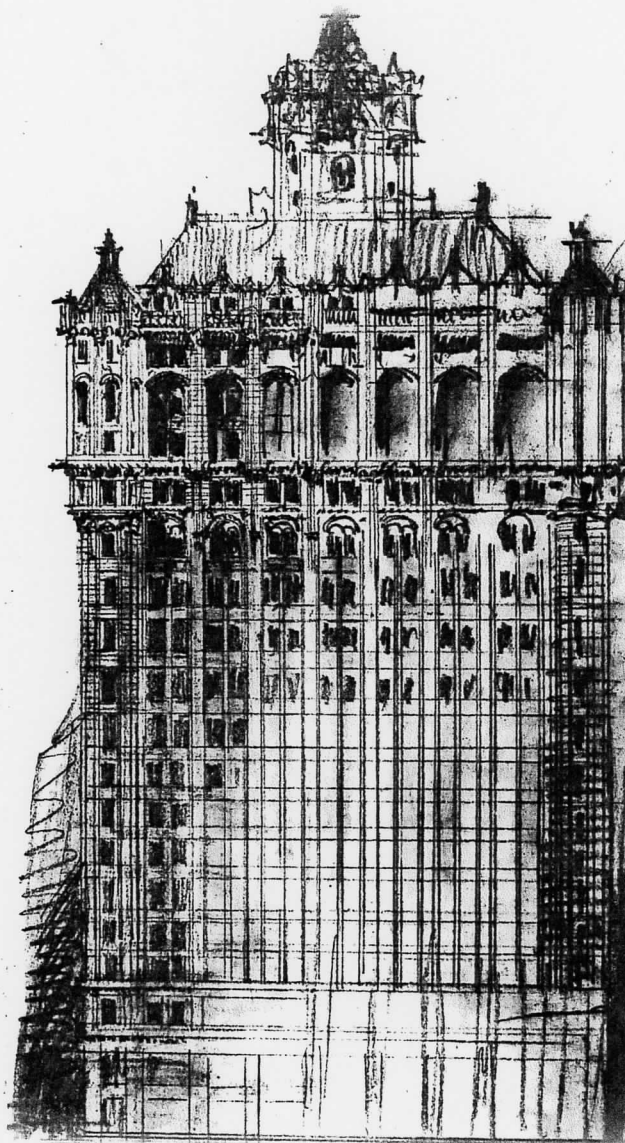
Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to transmit the West Street Building in New York, New York Co., NY for listing by the Keeper of the National Register. Many thanks for your assistance. Please feel free to call me at 518-237-8643 ext. 3258 if any questions arise.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Peckham
National Register
Program Coordinator

enclosure



90 West Street

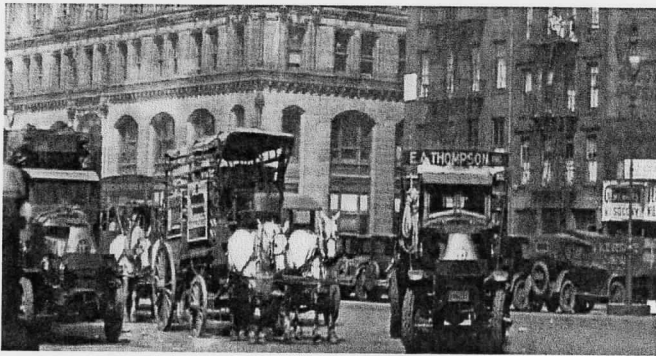
The Restoration of a
Cass Gilbert
Landmark

Submitted to the Preservation League
of New York State
February 2006



NYC Public Library Archive circa 1907

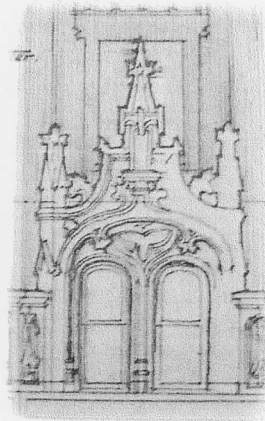
*Above is a view of 90 west street soon after completion
below is a view from West street looking north. (right)
view of east facade.*



West Street Building circa 1910 NYC Public Library Archive

Cass Gilbert's design emulates the tripartite division of a column: the 12-story shaft soaring upward from its base to a capital-like mansard roof embellished with ornate neo-Gothic details. The West Street Building, as it was originally named, bridges the gap stylistically and chronologically between Gilbert's classically embellished Broadway Chambers edifice (1899-1900) and his neo-Gothic skyscraper, the Woolworth Building (1910-1913).

90 West Street, a Cass Gilbert-designed building, has the elements that make it not only rare among skyscrapers, but extraordinary even among the modern marvels of New York City. General Howard Carroll commissioned the 23-story building in 1905 as a dockside commercial building for the shipping trade. The building remained a functioning office building until its ruin in the events of 9/11/2001.



*Detail of the dormer screen wall
from original architectural drawing (left).*

NY Historic Society



NYC Public Library Archive

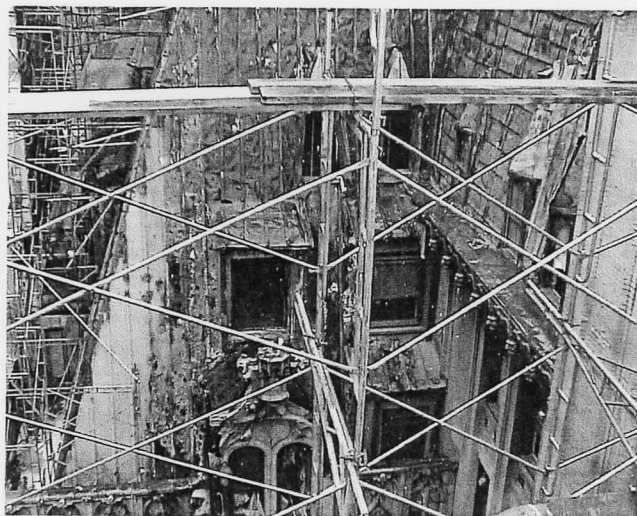


Owner's Photo 2003

Above and middle are views of the damaged Mansard roof and Dormers. Below is a view of the granite base on the north facade

Damage

Few structures downtown are as ornamented and no landmark was as badly damaged on 9/11; the mere fact of its survival, only 100 yards from the Trade Center inferno, was amazing enough and a testament to Gilbert's efforts to construct the safest building of his day.

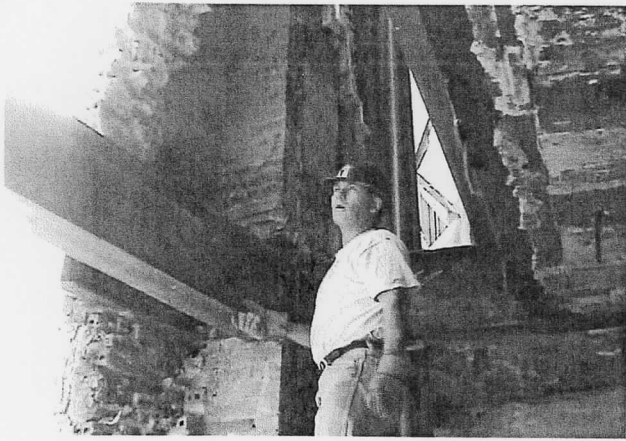


Owner's Photo 2003



Owner's Photo 2003

The landmark sustained massive damage when the South Tower collapsed. Falling debris raked the north side of the building, damaging several large sections of the façade, piercing walls and igniting fires. Fortunately, the building's steel skeleton and thick terra-cotta fireproofing helped to contain the fires. Much of the building was gutted by fire and the copper roof was completely destroyed.



Owner's Photo 2004

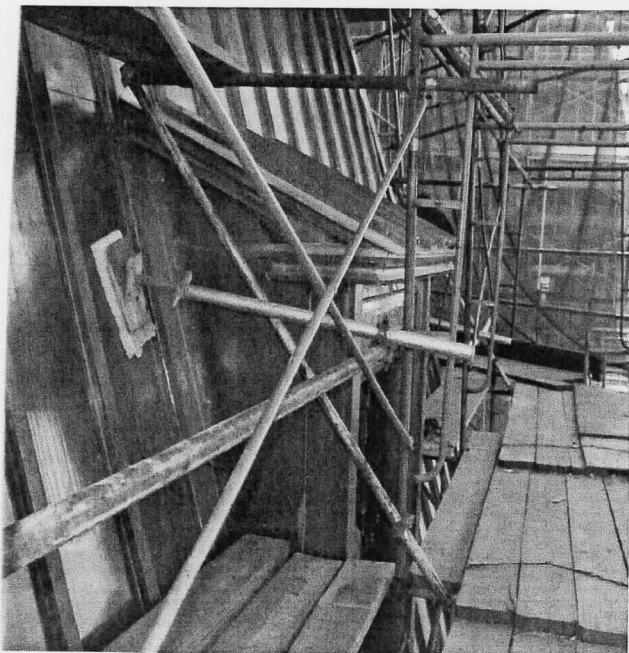
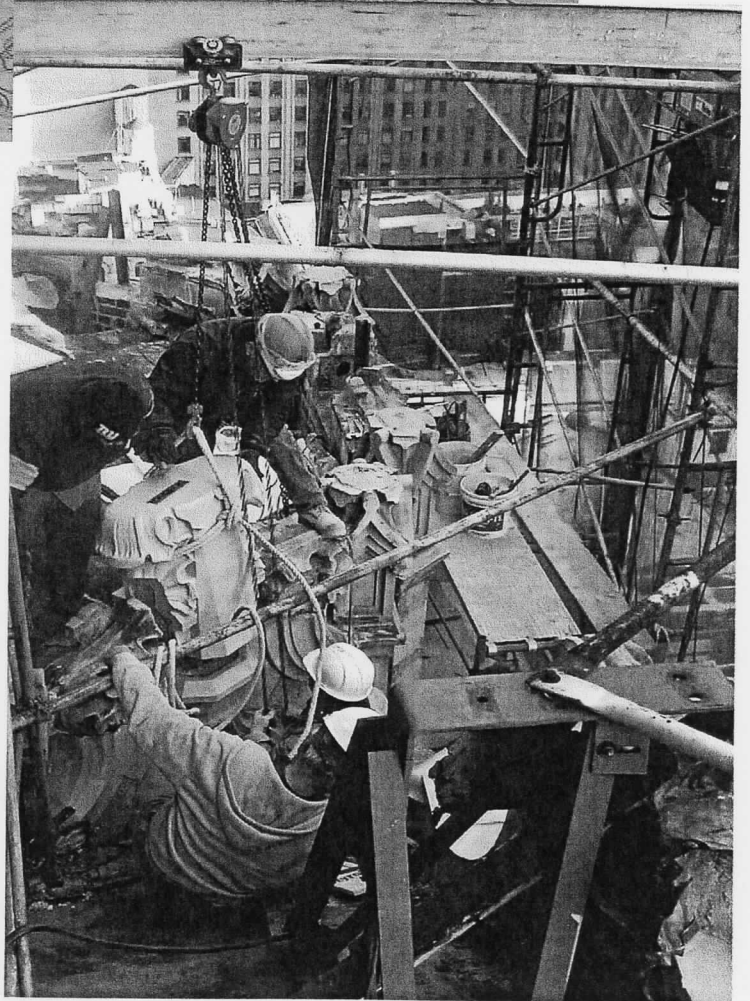
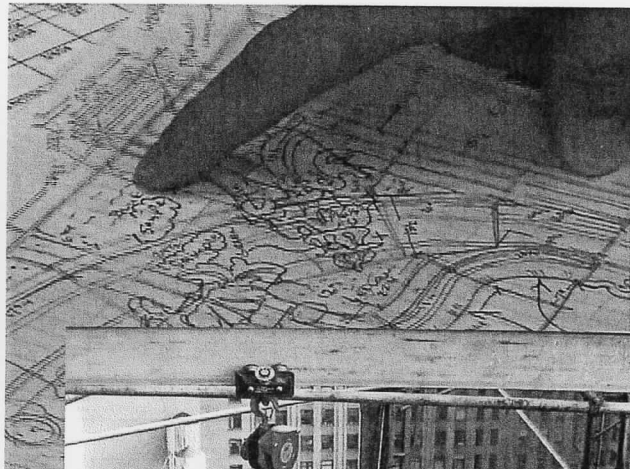
Above steel worker installs new spandrel beam at an upper floor on the north facade. Terracotta field sketch (right)



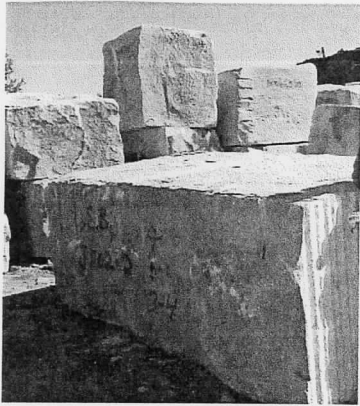
Some of the thousands of new terracotta tiles awaiting glaze and firing (above). Detail of new copper mansard roof and dormer (below).

Restoration

During the weeks following September 11, the building was structurally stabilized and weatherproofed. Then the process of damage repair began. The copper Mansard roof was entirely replaced. The dormers were copied and installed. Over 7,000 individual terracotta tiles were cataloged and replaced. Large Gargoyles and a host of smaller figures were hand sculpted in terracotta and granite to replace the destroyed originals.

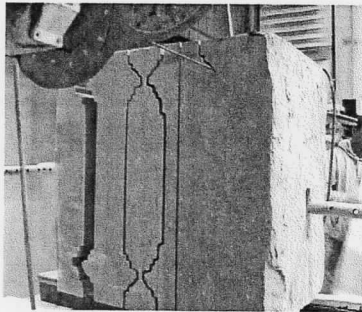


Terracotta screen walls being rebuilt. New terracotta cap lifted into place (above)



An extensive search was undertaken to find stone that matched the original granite used, since the original quarry was no longer active. Massive granite blocks were quarried in Maine, and then shipped to Canada for fabrication of the façade stone and decorative elements. Certain carvings required the stone to be flown to hand sculptors as far away as Italy.

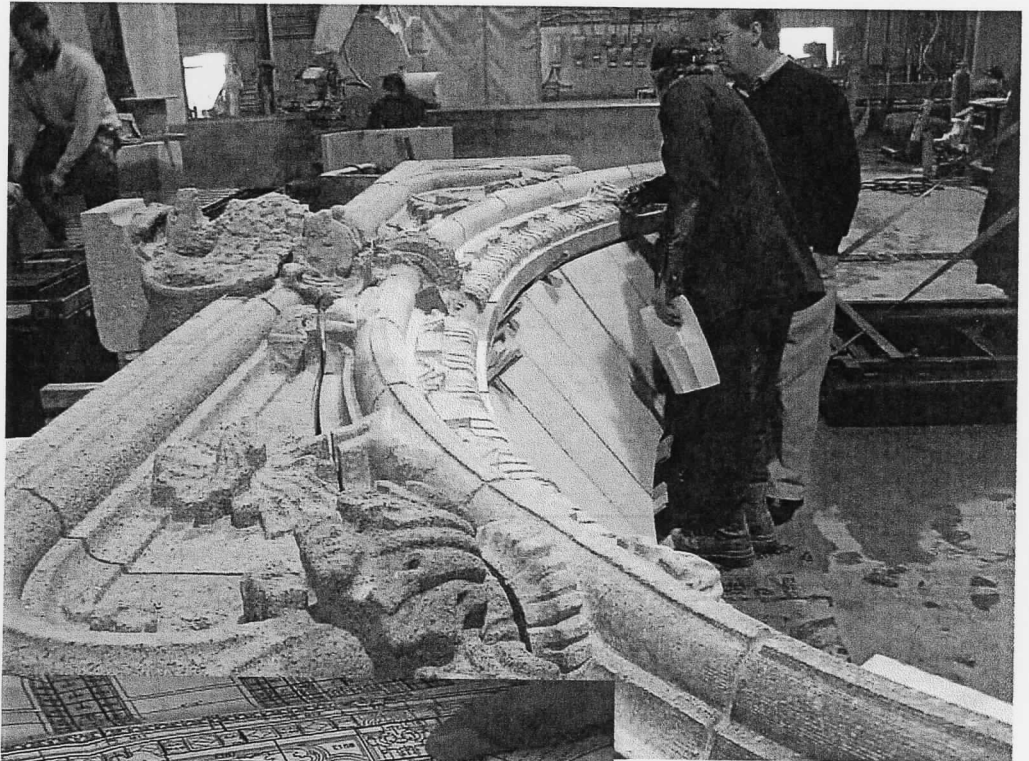
Once fabrication was completed, the granite was shipped to Utah where the individual units were assembled onto 15 steel installation frames. From Utah, the panels traveled to New York for installation.



*Granite blocks quarried in Maine (top)
Computerized saws cutting profiles in
Canada (middle)*

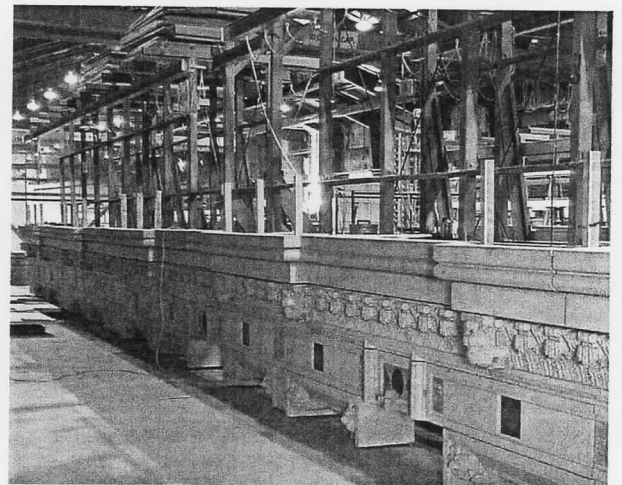
*Decorative window headers fabricated
in Italy (above)*

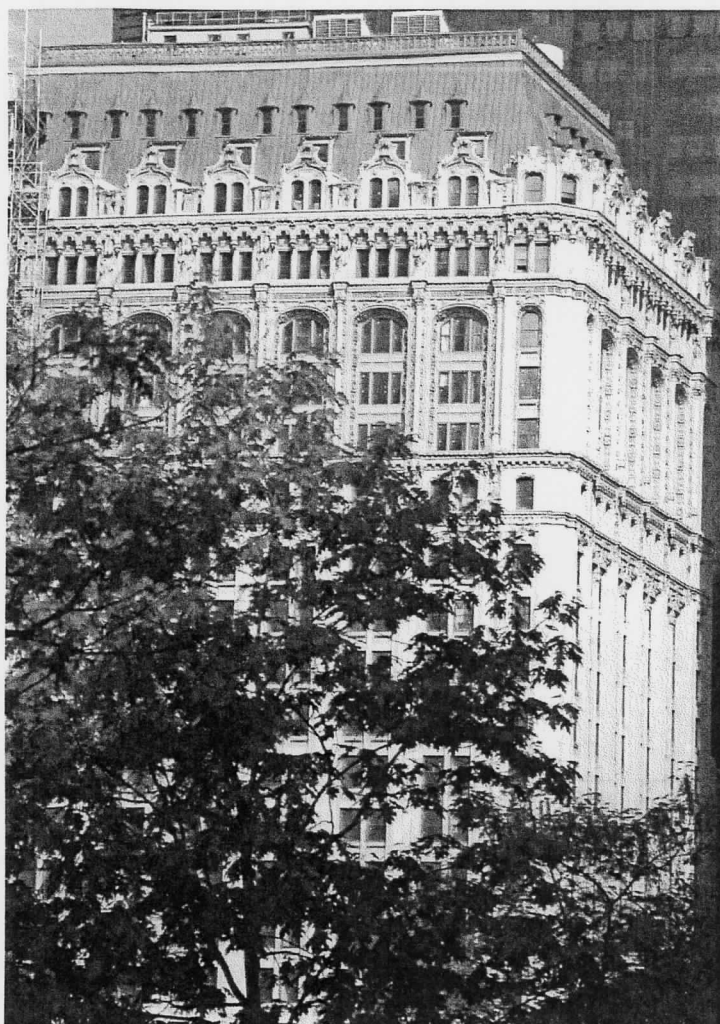
Installation of north entry arch (below)



*Engineering and initial reas-
sembly of north arch in Canada
(above)*

*3rd floor cornice completed in
Utah (below).*





Completion

The project took almost four years and countless man-hours to complete. The Kibel Companies, working with our partners BCRE and BD Hotels, painstakingly restored this landmark building to its original grandeur. 90 West Street opened its doors as a residential rental building in early April. By December, most of its 410 apartments were occupied.



90 West Street after complete renovation and conversion to residential building. (left)

Detail of cornice 20th floor (above) Detail of Griffin (below)

Photo of Lobby looking south (left)

