NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 01/2009)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

257

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 any 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.

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1. Name of Property

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historic name New York Telephone Company Building

other names/site number Barclay-Vesey Building

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2. Location

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street & number 140 West Street not for publication
city or town New York vicinity
state New York code NY county New York code 061
zip code 10007

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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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 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.)

Ruth Pierpont DSHPO — 3/16/09

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and 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 this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register Edson H. Beall 4.30.09
___ 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): _____

for
_____ _____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

_X_ private
___ public-local
___ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

_X_ building(s)
___ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: Office Building

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: Office Building

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE; METAL: Steel
roof NOT VISIBLE
walls METAL: Steel; CONCRETE; BRICK; STONE: Limestone
other

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

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)

X A Property is 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.

X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or 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.

DESCRIPTION OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The New York Telephone Company Building, also known as the Barclay-Vesey Building (this document will use the name Barclay-Vesey Building), is a thirty-two story skyscraper with five additional stories below ground located at 140 West Street in the Financial District of Lower Manhattan (Figure 1). The steel-frame, brick-clad building has a massive base that rises for sixteen stories (with setbacks beginning at the tenth story) from which a tower rises to the building's total height of thirty-two stories. The Barclay-Vesey Building occupies a parallelogram-shaped block, measuring approximately 210 by 250 feet that encompasses 52,000 square feet. The block is bounded by Barclay Street to the north, Vesey Street to the south, Washington Street to the east, and West Street (the West Side Highway) to the west. The Barclay-Vesey Building has been a hub for the communications industry since its construction, housing thousands of telephone and communication circuits.

Located in Manhattan's Financial District, the Barclay-Vesey Building is surrounded by many historic properties. In the immediate vicinity are the United States Post Office and Federal Office Building – Church Street Station at 90 Church Street (Cross & Cross and Pennington, Lewis & Mills,1934-38; National Register listed), the New York Evening Post Building at 20 Vesey Street (Robert D. Kohn, 1906-07; National Register-listed), the New York County Lawyers' Association at 14 Vesey Street (Cass Gilbert, 1929-30; National Register listed), and Saint Paul's Chapel and Graveyard (1764-66; National Historic Landmark). Further to the south is the West Street Building at 90 West Street (Cass Gilbert, 1905-07; National Register listed).

The Barclay-Vesey Building, located directly north of the former World Trade Center (WTC) was a witness to and survivor of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The WTC comprised the 110-story Twin Towers (1 and 2 WTC) which were the two tallest buildings in the world when completed in 1970 and 1972. The site also included Four and Five World Trade Center, both of which were nine-story buildings; the eight-story United States Customs House (6 WTC); and a 22-story hotel (3 WTC), all of which surrounded a plaza with a concourse below. The original 7 World Trade Center[1] was added to the WTC site in 1987 and was located directly east of the Barclay-Vesey Building, The collapses of the twin towers caused destruction of or extensive damage to all of the other buildings on the WTC site as well as several adjacent buildings.[2]

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1 The original 7 World Trade Center was destroyed on September 11, 2001 and replaced with the new 7 World Trade Center in 2006.
2 "Portions of the south tower (2WTC) fell on the hotel (3 WTC) at the corner of Liberty Street and Route 9A, on the building at the corner of Liberty and Church Streets (4 WTC), on the central plaza and on the surrounding streets and the area south of Liberty Street, including the building at plaza at 130 Liberty Street just to the south of the WTC. When the north tower (1WTC) collapsed portions fell on 6 WTC, on 5 WTC, on the plaza, and on the surrounding streets and structures west of Route 9A and north of Vesey Street. All mass transit stations and facilities at the WTC were destroyed....North of the WTC Site, damage to 7 WTC resulted in its collapse....South of the WTC Site, the Church of St. Nicholas was destroyed. Other buildings surrounding the WTC Site, including the Hilton Hotel, Century 21 Department Store and the Federal Office Building/U.S. Post Office on Church Street, Fiterman Hall on Barclay Street, 90 West Street and the Barclay-Vesey (Verizon) building on Route 9A, an the Winter Garden, the World Financial Center, and Gateway Plaza in BPC were also severely damaged." Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, *Coordinated Determination of National Register Eligibility*, Revised March 31, 2004, p. 7.

A memorial and museum are presently under development on the eight-acre former World Trade Center site. The remaining portions of the site will be developed with the Freedom Tower, three new World Trade Center towers, retail development, a performing arts center, and the World Trade Center transportation center.[3]

When both World Trade Center towers across Vesey Street and 7 World Trade Center across Washington Street fell, external bruising occurred on the south and east elevations (Vesey and Washington streets respectively) of the Barclay-Vesey Building. Much of the carved limestone on these façades was shattered. Girders pierced the building (many entering the structure at the seventh and fourteenth floors and ending up in the basements), thousands of windows were blown out, and basement vaults were flooded with water. The first floor lobby and its intricate ceiling murals, which had undergone conservation efforts during the late 1980s and early 1990s, sustained severe smoke damage. The original stonework on the West and Barclay Street façades remains largely intact, sustaining little to no damage from the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

DETAILED PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

EXTERIOR

Recognized as the first American Art Deco-style skyscraper, the brick-clad, steel- and concrete-framed Barclay-Vesey Building is thirty-two stories high with an additional five stories below ground. Mezzanines are located above the first, seventeenth, and thirty-first stories. The building rises uninterrupted from the ground to the tenth story, where the first setback occurs along the length of the north and south elevations. A setback also occurs at the center of the east and west elevations at this point, creating light courts for the eleventh through seventeenth stories. Setbacks again occur between the thirteenth and nineteenth stories. Another setback occurs at the seventeenth story on all elevations. From the seventeenth story, the tower, measuring 108 feet by 116 feet rises to the building's total height of thirty-two stories. The thirty-first story of the tower features arched multi-light windows framed by brick-clad piers. The tower is rotated forty-five degrees, aligning it with towers situated along Broadway – reflecting the "orthogonal grid of Manhattan."[4] As a result, pedestrians are presented with two conflicting images of the Barclay-Vesey tower: an obliquely angled mass, and a steel-supported façade with sharp angles (Figures 2 and 3). The tower's vertical brick-clad piers are decorated with battlements, and setbacks are adorned with elegant sculptural ornamentation in limestone.

The water table (base) of the building is granite, while the remainder of the structure is faced in gray-, gold- and buff-colored six-course American-bond brick. Brick piers rise either from the granite base or from the top of first story storefront windows, articulating the building's verticality. Feature elements of the façade include large cubic and ornately carved pieces of limestone on the lower stories and cast stone on upper stories. Exterior motifs consist of intertwining vines with leaves, flowers, and grapes. Cherubs, human figures, as well as fish, snails, mice, lizards, birds, frogs, squirrels, and snakes are interlaced in the vines. Variations of the vine pattern are present throughout the design program.

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3 "Building a National Tribute" http://www.national911memorial.org/site/PageServer?pagename=building_home. Accessed October 31, 2008.
4 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building,*" October 1, 1991: 8.

The east and west elevations have identical double-height, recessed entrances spanning three bays. Each entrance is composed of two sets of revolving multi-pane doors and a double-leaf door, all framed in bronze; the bronze frames separate each entryway and feature decorative engravings with a star motif. Above both the east and west entrances is a large window. A bronze screen ornamented with vertically arranged vines and grapes covers each window. Metal models of the Bell Telephone Company logo (a bell within a circle) no longer adorn the bronze screens (the outline is still slightly visible on both the east and west elevations). The limestone lintel above the bronze screen is ornamented with the image of two human figures flanking a bird. An inverted setback-shaped light fixture hangs between two ceiling panels on each recessed entrance; the bronze light fixture mimics the form of the building. Each recessed entrance has a limestone-faced door surround with chamfered vertical members. The vertical components of the surround are unadorned on the outer portion and ornamented with vines on the inner portions. The limestone friezes of each entrance surround depict the figures of an American Indian and a Mongolian, intended to symbolize the lands of the east and west, the directions the entrances face. Between the two human figures, a bell is engraved on each frieze. Storefront windows on the west and east elevations are based on a tripartite design: a solid panel at the base, a glazed area at the middle section usually divided into three vertical sections, and a transom with additional vertical subdivisions. Metal lintels ornamented with images of dolphins, seahorses, and birds top storefront windows adjacent to the entrances. Winged figures are used as the pinnacles on the metal lintels. The northernmost bays on the east and west elevations use the same tripartite window design but are topped with arched limestone lintels. The southernmost bays on both the east and west elevations are Guastavino arches with ornamented limestone surrounds that provide access to the pedestrian arcade.

The vaulted twelve-bay pedestrian arcade with tiled Guastavino arches runs the entire length of Vesey Street (the south elevation). The arcade is sixteen feet wide, nineteen feet high, and 252 feet in length. The arches rest on brick piers with granite bases. The arcade also incorporates storefronts similar to those on the west and east elevations but with recessed transoms in each bay. Storefront openings on the south elevation have limestone surrounds. Surrounds display vine motifs, accented with cherubs, roosters, and squirrels.

The north elevation also features tripartite storefront windows; these storefront windows have surrounds mimicking the arched limestone surrounds found on the south elevation. Storefront surrounds on the north elevation are topped with limestone spandrel panels. Several storefront transoms on the north elevation have been modified to hold louvered vents. The central two bays on the north elevation have been modified to hold roll-up metal garage doors.

Fenestration is consistent on the upper stories (second through thirty-second story). Window openings generally hold 3/3 metal sashes; select window openings on all elevations are filled with louvered vents. Louvered vents have replaced window sashes in areas housing mechanicals and communication-related equipment. Second story windows situated in the central bays on each elevation have limestone surrounds; engraved images of lions adorn the spandrel panels of these windows. The vertical portions of the surrounds are finished with angular notching. The pyramidal lintel panels of the surrounds are highly ornate, featuring vines, grapes, and birds. Window openings on the outer bays of each elevation feature limestone lintels and sills engraved with vines and grapes. Third story windows are much simpler in ornamentation, featuring only limestone sills decorated with vines and grapes. Window openings on the fourth through thirty-second stories are finished with flat, unadorned limestone sills and brick header lintels.

At all elevations, cast stone ornamentation appears on the upper stories, increasing in amount above the twenty-eighth story. Corner piers at the twenty-ninth story, for example, display elephant heads with ears transformed into geometric shapes and trunks extending down the corner of the tower.

INTERIOR

The building's first floor lobby features intricate ornamentation that exhibits continuity with the exterior design. A vaulted lobby, approximately twenty-two feet high runs east to west through the center of the building from Washington to West streets (with each entrance having its own address). Four elevator alcoves (two to the north and two to the south) and a public telephone alcove open off the main corridor. The elevator alcoves have recessed lighting and painted ceilings complementing the murals in the vaulted corridor. Elevators have ornate bronze surrounds. The lobby has buff-colored travertine walls matching the buff-colored travertine floors. The floors feature black travertine tile detailing with a geometric motif. Two bronze medallions rest in the middle of the corridor's floor and depict the construction of New York telephone network, specifically the "cooperation between home office and field."[5] Sections of the lobby walls between the elevator lobbies are clad with Levanto marble. Evenly spaced fluted pilasters run the length of the vaulted corridor and are also fashioned of Levanto marble, as are doorframes of the doorways opening off the main corridor. Bronze capitals decorated with a vine and grape motif top the pilasters. The vaulted ceiling is decorated with twelve hand-painted murals depicting the history of communication, including such scenes as West Africans using drums to transmit signals and medieval knights conveying messages by signal flags. The success of the modern communication – telephone, telegraph, and radio – is depicted in the central panels. A bronze cornice with engraved intertwining vines and bunches of grapes visually separates the wall surface from the ceiling. Recessed lighting is located just above the cornice and runs the length of the corridor.

As initially conceived, the first ten floors of the building would house the central offices and equipment. These floors originally housed the personnel and equipment of six central offices that serviced 120,000 telephones. The seventeenth floor was designed to accommodate dual mechanical systems: one for the base of the building (floors 1-16) and one for the tower (floors 18-32). The upper floors were dedicated to administrative functions for all departments within the company. Executive offices were located on the twenty-ninth floor and an assembly room able to hold 6,500 workers was located on the thirty-first floor.

Due to changing programmatic needs dictated by the communications field, interior spaces have undergone modest alteration. Each floor retains its original floor plate, which on lower floors (floors 2-16) includes two elevator lobbies with offices lining the perimeter walls and on the upper floors (floors 18-32) includes one elevator lobby with office space lining the perimeter walls. Following the collapse of the World Trade Center towers and the subsequent damaged incurred by the Barclay-Vesey Building, the executive offices were restored to their original appearances, which includes maple wainscoting, oak plank floors, and carved ornament but updated with modern technology. The thirty-first floor assembly hall has been altered to provide a conference room and additional office space to meet current

5 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building, First Floor Interior,*" October 1, 1991:8

needs but retains historic finishes in the vaulted corridor spaces. The seventeenth story continues to house two mechanical systems, separated by an elevator lobby. Lower stories continue to provided office space; office areas are open and have non-historic finishes such as wall-to-wall carpeting and acoustical tile ceilings. The first floor mezzanine level, which historically provided non-public spaces, has been altered to provide conference and break rooms for employees. The retail space located along Vesey Street has been converted to office space. Elevator lobbies throughout the building, with the exception of the first floor lobby, retain the original marble wainscoting but have non-historic vinyl composite tile flooring and acoustical tile ceilings. The first floor elevator lobbies retain all their historic finishes.

ALTERATIONS

Limited exterior alterations have occurred throughout the lifespan of the Barclay-Vesey Building. The collapse of the neighboring World Trade Center towers on September 11, 2001, caused external bruising to the building, forcing the repair and coating of the brick facing. Thousands of windows were blown out due to the collapse, requiring the installation of the existing 3/3 metal-sashes; these windows replicate the historic windows in size, color, and profile. Interior alterations include the rehabilitation of the five basement levels and subsequent conversion into office space and equipment storage following the flooding that resulted from the collapse of the World Trade Center towers. A new flood prevention system has been installed around the perimeter of the basement. The second floor mezzanine has been altered to provide conference rooms. Office spaces have remained largely unchanged, continuing to line the perimeter walls of each floor. Office areas have non-historic finishes including wall-to-wall carpeting and acoustical tile ceilings.

INTEGRITY

The Barclay-Vesey Building retains its integrity of location, continuing to encompass the entire block and still bounded by West, Barclay, Vesey and Washington streets. The building's workmanship, materials, feeling, and design all retain a high level of integrity through its intact form and massing and well-maintained limestone ornamentation. Although compromised following the September 11, 2001 attacks and the subsequent loss of neighboring buildings, the Barclay-Vesey Building retains sufficient integrity of setting. Having housed activities related to the communication field since its construction through the present, the building maintains its integrity of association.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNICATIONS

Period of Significance 1923-1958

Significant Dates 1923-1927

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Walker, Ralph (architect)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Barclay-Vesey Building, originally known as the New York Telephone Company Building (presently owned by Verizon Communications), was constructed between 1923 and 1927 and is recognized as the first American Art Deco-style skyscraper. The building was the first major work of Ralph T. Walker (1889-1973), a prominent New York architect known as a specialist in the design of communications centers. Regarded as a pivotal structure in both skyscraper technology and American architecture since its construction, the Barclay-Vesey Building was officially designated as a New York City Landmark in 1991. The 1991 landmark designation included the first floor lobby, which exhibits intricate ornamentation largely in the form of extensive murals that depict the history of communication. The Barclay-Vesey Building meets National Register Criterion C as a prototypical example of the American Art Deco style applied to a skyscraper whose design was influenced both by the restrictions imposed by the 1916 New York zoning regulations and by its parallelogram-shaped site in lower Manhattan. The building possesses exquisite examples of nontraditional and complex ornamentation that incorporate the history of the site, the surrounding area, and the field of communication. Upon its completion, the Barclay-Vesey Building was promoted as the world's largest telephone building and communication center and was regarded as a "corporate symbol" for the entire telephone industry. The Barclay-Vesey Building meets Criterion A in the area of communications for its association with an industry whose work was clearly at the vanguard of modern technology. The building continues to convey its architectural significance as part of the dramatic Manhattan skyline while continuing to serve as a communications center, currently housing the Verizon corporate offices.

RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY (AT&T)

The roots of the New York Telephone Company can be traced to 1875 when Alexander Graham Bell, who was working in his laboratory at night while teaching speech to the deaf during the day, signed an agreement with two investors, Gardiner C. Hubbard and Thomas Sanders. On March 7, 1876, Bell secured patent number 174,465 covering "the method of, and apparatus for, transmitting vocal or other sounds telegraphically . . . by causing electric undulations, similar in form to the vibrations of the air accompanying the said vocal or other sounds."[6] The following week, Bell transmitted the now famous line, "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you;" it was the first message sent by telephone.[7] Throughout the summer of 1876, Bell's telephone was displayed at Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition. In 1877, the three members of the patent agreement formed the Bell Telephone Company (later the American Bell Telephone Company), thereby securing the capability to capture the financial potential of the telephone. Initially, commercial applications of the device were unclear. Some saw the telephone simply as an oddity. Many, such as Asbury Park's founder James Bradley, saw only the potential of private line service linking two specific points. Yet within a year, others, such as John Noonan, shaped broader commercial applications for the telephone. Noonan, in fact,

6 "History of Electronic Music: Alexander Graham Bell," Inventors Assistance League. http://www.inventions.org/electronic-music/bell.html. Accessed 09 Dec. 2004.
7 "A Capsule History of the Bell System," Bell System Memorial. http://www.bellsystemmemorial.com/capsule_bell_system.html. Accessed 09 Dec. 2004.

"single-handedly" wired Paterson, New Jersey in 1878 – installing all the telephones, wires and switchboards.[8] In 1879, he strung long-distance wire to Manhattan, with Newark, Jersey City, and other communities soon following. The first telephone exchange, operating under license from Bell Telephone, opened in New Haven, Connecticut, also in 1878.[9] Within three years, telephone exchanges, operating under licenses from the newly formed American Bell Telephone Company (incorporated in 1880), existed in most major cities and towns in the United States.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) was incorporated on March 3, 1885 as a wholly owned subsidiary of American Bell Telephone Company and was chartered, "to build and operate the original long distance telephone network."[10] Building out from New York, AT&T reached its initial goal of Chicago in 1892 and then San Francisco in 1915. The New York Telephone Company was organized in 1896, taking over the New York City operations of the American Bell Telephone Company. On December 30, 1899, AT&T acquired the assets of American Bell and became the parent company of the Bell System, incorporating Bell Telephone Laboratories and Western Electric, as well.

Until Bell's second patent expired in 1894, only Bell Telephone and its licensees could legally operate telephone systems in the United States. Between 1894 and 1904, over 6,000 independent telephone companies went into business in the United States, and the number of telephones grew from 285,000 to 3,317,000.[11] During this decade, previously unwired areas received their first telephone service and previously wired locations received additional choices in telephone companies. There was, however, no interconnection between different company systems; subscribers to different telephone companies could not call each other. This situation did not begin to be resolved until after 1913.

From 1907-1919, with Theodore Newton Vail (1845-1920) as president (serving as such for the second time), AT&T began consolidating the Bell associated companies into state and regional organizations, assimilating many previous independent companies. Nationalized briefly in 1918 under the Post Office Department (due to monopoly fears), the company was, however, returned to private control a year later. Then, in 1921, as affirmed by the Graham-Willis Act, AT&T – as a, "natural monopoly" – agreed to provide long-distance service to *all* independent telephone companies and to buy independent telephone companies only in special cases and only if approved by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC).[12]

After Vail retired as AT&T President, one of his subsequent successors, Walter Gifford, decided that AT&T (which had been engaging in a range of businesses since the early 1900s, including telephone equipment manufacturing) should refocus its efforts on its initial goal of establishing universal telephone service in the United States. Gifford therefore sold the International Western Electric Company for $33 million in 1925, and with this infusion of cash,

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8 "New Jersey Bell's 50th Anniversary," *New Jersey Business – A Publication of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association*, (December 1977), p. 40.
9 "History of Verizon New Jersey, Years 1876-1930" Verizon – Verizon New Jersey. http://www.verizonnj.com/about/community/nj/about/history/1876_1930.asp. Accessed 11 January 2005.
10 "AT&T History – Origins," AT&T. http://www.att.com/history/history1.html. Accessed 11 January 2005.
11 "AT&T History – Origins," AT&T. http://www.att.com/history/history1.html. Accessed 11 January 2005.
12 This agreement was initially accepted by AT&T and the United States government in 1913 and was known then as the Kingsbury Commitment. It became law under the Graham-Willis Act of 1921. See "A Capsule History of the Bell System," Bell System Memorial. http://www.bellsystemmemorial.com/capsule_bell_system.html. Accessed 09 Dec. 2004.

AT&T embarked on a formalized structure of geographically based, wholly owned operating companies – the Bell System.[13] The New York Telephone Company continued to control Bell operations for New York City after the Bell System was established.

NEW YORK TELEPHONE COMPANY HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

Howard Ford Thurber (1869-1928) became president of the New York Telephone Company in 1919 just as the company began to experience rapid, postwar growth. The company established divisional headquarters throughout the state in an effort to control and organize growth. An assessment of the company's organization in New York City determined that its personnel, offices, and equipment were scattered to the point of inefficiency. Thurber, who would serve as president of the company until 1924, concluded that the New York Telephone Company needed a new headquarters building in order to provide unity to the company. Thurber envisioned a building that would be large enough to "satisfy the present demands and to reasonably anticipate future requirements." The headquarters building needed to consolidate an equipment and administrative center, while incorporating personnel from the six central offices. Such a building program required a large utilitarian facility with specialized mechanical features and space for a centralized work force of approximately 6,000 employees serving 120,000 telephones. Thurber believed a new building with a modern, progressive design would not only centralize the company's operations but also establish and project a strong corporate image.[14]

The New York Telephone Company chose a site near the waterfront in lower Manhattan where land was more affordable than in other areas of Manhattan and worked to acquire all the lots in the block defined by West, Barclay, Vesey, and Washington streets. According to J.S. McCulloh, the New York Telephone Company's commercial vice president in 1923, the company "chose the West Street location because real estate values in that vicinity were much lower than in the Broadway district." McCulloh, in discussing the new location, stated, "Studies made by our engineers, building men, and architects showed that we could erect one building on this plot which would serve as both administrative and central office quarters and do it at much lower cost than if we followed the usual course of providing one building of the special design required for housing central office apparatus and another of our general offices."[15]

The waterfront location in lower Manhattan chosen for the new headquarters building was initially and intensively developed beginning in the early nineteenth century. The banks of the Hudson River were filled in, extended, and raised; piers were constructed at the end of every street between Vesey and King streets by the late 1830s as part of the development of Lower Manhattan. These improvements were crucial to the city's mercantile expansion and recognition as the country's major port and trading center as early as the 1830s and 1840s. The portion of Lower Manhattan where the Barclay-Vesey Building is situated and the area just north (present-day Tribeca), were transformed into a center for dairy goods, produce, and other goods including tobacco, wood, coffee, and spices. Markets for these items were established close the docks to facilitate the handling of commodities. The Washington

13 "AT&T History – Early International History." AT&T. http://www.att.com/history/history2.html. Accessed 11 January 2005.
14 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:2.
15 "New Addition to Lower Manhattan's Skyline; Telephone Company to Erect 29-Story Building" *New York Times* April 1, 1923:RE1.

Market, established in 1812, was located just south of the Barclay-Vesey block and bounded by West, Washington, Vesey and Fulton streets. The market became Manhattan's major wholesale and retail produce outlet. Buildings were constructed throughout the area to support the food industry, including the thirty-five buildings formerly located on the site of the Barclay-Vesey Building.[16]

It took the New York Telephone Company several years and $1,481,111 to acquire the entire block.[17] At the time the New York Telephone Company gained ownership of the entire site (early 1923), the block was improved with several three- and four-story buildings used as lofts and markets.[18] With acquisition of the site complete, the company looked for an architectural firm that could provide a thoroughly modern design while accommodating the personnel and equipment needs associated with the communications field. The New York-based architectural firm McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin was a natural choice based on their extensive experience designing telephone-related buildings.

RALPH THOMAS WALKER (1889-1973) OF MCKENZIE, VOORHEES & GMELIN

Ralph T. Walker was born in Waterbury, Connecticut in 1889. Walker attended Classical High School in Providence, Rhode Island, and then the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Graduating from MIT in 1911 with a degree in architecture, Walker went on to hold MIT's Rotch Traveling Scholarship in 1916. Walker served as a lieutenant in the camouflage section of the Army Corps of Engineers during World War I (1914-1918). In 1919, following his service with the Army Corps of Engineers, Walker joined the architectural firm of McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin.[19] McKenzie, Voorhees, & Gmelin was a well-respected firm whose early success was tied to the telephone industry. The firm's roots date to 1885, nine years after the invention of the telephone. The firm formed with the partnership of architect Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz and structural engineer Andrew C. McKenzie to design the Metropolitan Telephone Building in New York City. Four years later, Eidlitz and McKenzie worked on the Western Electric Company Building, also located in New York City. The telephone company commissions notwithstanding, their most noteworthy building in the early years was the 1903 New York Times Building.20 When Eidlitz retired in 1910, McKenzie joined with Stephen Voorhees and Paul Gmelin to form a new firm. Voorhees trained at Princeton as a civil engineer. The German-born designer Gmelin is credited with much of the original design of the New York Times Building. Both were working at Eidlitz & McKenzie when Eidlitz retired. Like its predecessor firm, the first work of Mackenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin was a communications building – the American Telephone & Telegraph's 1911 Long Distance Building at 32 Sixth Avenue (1930-32) in New York. Within a couple of years, the firm had completed a total of thirty-two new telephone buildings in New York, and subsequent telephone company work in Washington, D.C., Albany, Buffalo, and Newark.

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16 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:2.
17 "New Addition to Lower Manhattan's Skyline; Telephone Company to Erect 29-Story Building" *New York Times* April 1, 1923:RE1.
18 These buildings were razed between May 23 1923 and July 14, 1923. Work on the Barclay-Vesey Building foundation began before demolition of existing structures was complete.
19 "Ralph T. Walker is Dead at 83; Hailed as 'Architect of the Century'" *New York Times* January 18, 1973:44.
20 The *New York Times* was located in this building by Eidlitz and MacKenzie at 1 Times Square until 1913 when it moved to larger quarters on West 43rd Street. Upon the opening of the Times Square building on December 31, 1904, the Times marked the occasion with a fireworks display at midnight, a tradition that has remained since that time. The building has undergone major renovations through the years and no longer retains period integrity. Today, its exterior serves largely as a giant signboard.

Walker was selected as the lead architect and chief designer for 1923 New York Telephone Company Building commission. Walker's design created a sensation when the building opened to tenants in 1926; the thirty-two-story Manhattan skyscraper (with office space for over 6,000 workers) was the first Art Deco (referred to as Modernist at the time) skyscraper. The design offered what Walker referred to as a 'modern perpendicular' that broke with traditional, historical styles. The design, responding to provisions in the New York City's 1916 zoning regulations, was both streamlined and straightforward for its time while maximizing the allowable building bulk through setbacks.[21]

While working on the New York Telephone Company headquarters building project and following the death of Andrew C. McKenzie, Walker was named a partner in the firm. On December 19, 1926, the *New York Times* announced the firm had changed its name to Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker.[22] In 1927, Ralph Walker of McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin was awarded the Architectural League of New York's gold *Medal of Honor* for the New York Telephone Company Building's fine expression of the new industrial age and their "notable contribution to modern architecture." The league's jury of judges stated, "A result has been achieved expressive of a high degree of skill and good taste in both general mass and in interesting detail. A quality of excellence is to be observed in the various rooms, indicating a consistent thought, followed by unremitting care in execution." McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin were further praised as being the first firm of architects to follow the league's by-law encouraging the award-winning firm to nominate the architect (in this case Ralph Walker) most responsible for the winning design.[23]

The Barclay-Vesey Building established Walker's reputation and influenced his subsequent designs. Walker became known as a specialist in designing communications buildings; he was excellent at "adapting inventively to their peculiar equipment requirements, heavy floor loads, and desired public image of refined, discreet nattiness."[24] Walker continued to design buildings for the American Telephone & Telegraph Company (the New York Telephone Company's parent company) and for the telephone industry in general. Walker's subsequent communication-related works include the 1928-1929 New Jersey Bell Headquarters in Newark (listed in the National Register in 2005), the 1928-1930 Western Union Building at 60 Hudson Street (designated a New York City landmark in 1991), and the 1930-1932 Long Distance Building of AT&T at 32 Sixth Avenue (designated a New York City landmark in 1991), both in New York City.[25] These works were all executed in the Art Deco vocabulary and are all extant. Influences of the Barclay-Vesey Building are particularly visible in the design of the Western Union Building (Figure 4), which exhibits the same style of setbacks, massing, and use of vertical piers to emphasize the building's verticality.

Walker became active in several architectural and planning associations throughout his career. Walker was a member of the Architectural Commission of the Century of Progress Exposition at Chicago (1933-1934). In 1933, he was elected president of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.[26] For the 1939-1940 World's Fair,

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21 "The Man Behind Manhattan's Deco Mountains" *New York Times* April 21, 1991:H36.
22 "New Firm of Architects" *New York Times* December 19, 1926:E21.
23 "Architects Get Medals of Honor" *New York Times* February 27, 1927:16.
24 "The Man Behind Manhattan's Deco Mountains" *New York Times* April 21, 1991:H36.
25 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:3.
26 "Heads Architects' Group" *New York Times* June 10, 1933:14.

which was held in New York City, Walker designed the Petroleum Industries pavilion and other pavilions for General Electric, Borden, American Telephone & Telegraph, American Radiator, and Equitable Life.[27] Ralph Walker was also involved with the East River Houses Associated Architects who designed low-income housing; the East River Houses were part of the fourth public housing development in Manhattan.[28]

By 1940, Walker's firm had transformed into Voorhees, Walker, Foley, and Smith, and he had served as president of the Architectural League of New York. In early 1940, Ralph T. Walker was elected president of the Municipal Art Society succeeding Alfred Geiffert Jr.[29] Walker was then elected as an associate of the National Academy of Design in 1948.[30] Walker continued to serve as president of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects until 1949 when he was elected president of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.). As president of the A.I.A., Walker oversaw the redecorating and refurnishing of the Octagon House in Washington, D.C. The Octagon House, constructed between 1798 and 1800, was first restored by the A.I.A. in 1898 and used by the organization for fifty years as the center for the institute's national activities. The A.I.A. constructed a new facility adjacent to the Octagon House prior to World War II (1939-1945), and, under Walker, planned the restoration of the Octagon House, which would be used to hold receptions.[31] Walker served as president of the A.I.A. until 1951. In 1956, Walker was appointed to the New York Regional Planning Board; the *New York Times* noted Walker was a member of the American Institute of Planners and the American Society of Planning Officials as well as the architect of the United Nations Headquarters at Lake Success, Long Island and the M.I.T. library.[32]

In 1957, the A.I.A., on its 100th anniversary, conferred upon Walker the title "architect of the century." According to the *New York Times,* the A.I.A. sought to bestow this once a century award on an "architect whose total effort to advance his profession and whose extensive public service were deemed worthy of exceptional recognition," rather than on an architect "who had won fame for his virtuoso performances in designing 'showpiece' buildings." The *New York Times* announcement of the award went on to note that Frank Lloyd Wright once referred to Walker as "the only other architect in America."[33] Walker retired from practice in 1958 but continued to be active in professional organizations and his community.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE BARCLAY-VESEY BUILDING, 1923-1927

On April 1, 1923, the *New York Times* announced the New York Telephone Company's plan to construct a twenty-nine story building in lower Manhattan to serve as the company's central office and administration building as well as an operations center. The design published in the *New York Times* depicted the proposed headquarters building rising 404 feet in height and providing 680,000 square feet of workspace and 38,000 of ground-level retail space. The new headquarters, it was reported, was to be constructed of steel and concrete and faced with cream-buff brick and

27 "Ralph T. Walker is Dead at 83; Hailed as 'Architect of the Century'" *New York Times* January 18, 1973:44.
28 "Housing Project in 1st Ave. Started" *New York Times* March 3, 1940:14.
29 "Ralph Walker Heads Municipal Art Group" *New York Times* May 16, 1940:28.
30 "National Academy Elects Associates" *New York Times* April 20, 1948:21.
31 "Architects Rebuild Old Octagon House" *New York Times* October 9, 1949: R11.
32 "3 Named to Regional Plan Board" *New York Times* April 16, 1956:50.
33 "Architect of the Century" *New York Times* May 17, 1957:26.

limestone trimmings. The 1923 rendering published in the *New York Times* showed a modernistic skyscraper with variegated setbacks and vertical massing (Figure 5).[34] The setbacks were necessary to comply with the 1916 New York City zoning regulations, which were enacted "to prevent the 'canyon effect' that, it was feared, would destroy the quality of street-life and prevent daylight from reaching ground level."[35] The 1916 zoning ordinance consisted of rules governing the use and form of new construction throughout the city. Controls were imposed on the disposition of accommodation permissible on a lot (Figure 6); these controls were based on both the lot size and the location of the proposed building in the city.[36] The zoning regulations divided the city into height districts and a maximum three-dimensional limit was defined for each site to protect the light and ventilation of adjacent lots. The height and setback regulations applied to seventy-five percent of each site; the remaining twenty-five percent of the building site had no height limitations. The zoning regulations restricted the bulk and form of buildings, forcing architects to design within the constrictions of the setback zoning system. The setback system complicated the design process, which was already effected by both structural limitations and economic restraints.[37]

Walker produced plans for buildings of ten, sixteen, twenty-six, twenty-nine, thirty-two, thirty-six, and forty-two stories throughout the design process to study the relationship between cost and height in order to construct the tallest, most cost effective building possible within the confines of the 1916 zoning regulations. Although increasing the height of a building should decrease the cost per square foot of the land on which the buildings sits, additional stories and a design incorporating setbacks was more expensive to construct and could increase the overall building cost. Thus, Walker needed to take into account not only the zoning laws but also the increased cost of construction for taller buildings and the market value of similar spaces in order to settle on the ideal height for the Barclay-Vesey Building. As Walker explained in 1926, "It seems to me, therefore, that the architectural problem of the skyscraper, especially in New York City is this: To express the efficiency of the mechanical parts made necessary by its size with the social requirements of its occupants, within these limitations – economy and those imposed by the zoning law."[38] Studies concluded that the thirty-two story tower, incorporating setbacks at the tenth, thirteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth stories proved most economical on all counts. As a result, the initial rendering published in the *New York Times* was modified; the final design called for a headquarters building of thirty-two stories.[39]

Although working with many restrictions, Walker's design for the New York Telephone Company Building achieved a maximum floor area within the allowable 'envelope' and became a model of how to design within the 1916 zoning regulations.[40] Walker, commenting on his design in 1926, wrote:

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34 "New Addition to Lower Manhattan's Skyline; Telephone Company to Erect 29-Story Building" *New York Times* April 1, 1923:RE1.
35 Greenstreet, Robert C., "The Impact of Building Codes and Legislation Upon the Development of Tall Buildings," *Architronic,* 1996. http://architronic.saed.kent.edu/v5n2/v5n2.03.html. Accessed 6 August 2003.
36 "New York Urban History and Zoning Laws" from http://www.manhattan2050.com/urban.html. Accessed October 14, 2008.
37 Harvey Wiley Corbett, "Zoning and the Envelope of the Building," *Pencil Points* 4 (April 1923), 18, quoted in NYCPLC, "*LPC Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991: 4.
38 Walker, R.T. "The Barclay-Vesey Building" *The American Architect* November 20, 1926, vol. 130, no. 2509:393.
39 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:5.
40 Architectural critics have said Walker's Barclay-Vesey design was greatly influenced by Eliel Gottlieb Saarinen's second-place finish in the 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition, but Walker's own entry to the competition also featured vertical piers and setback transitions.

> The building is as modern as the telephone activity it houses. It is not in any way reminiscent of the Greek Temple or a Gothic cathedral, but it is a simple, straight-forward solution of a commercial building using inexpensive everyday materials. In style it might readily be called modern perpendicular from the piers which rise sheer from the granite base at the street to the very top. The emphasis placed on these piers gives to what easily might have been a series of gigantic packing boxes, piled end on end, a vertical unity, a dignity and a style. In sharp contrast with the vertical rigidity of the buff brick piers, the limestone lintels, sills, and arches are carved with a free and flowing ornament, which was designed to be an integral part of the wall it decorates and, at the same time, accentuate its verticality. The method of carving, a combination of engraving and both low and high relief, is peculiar to this building alone. The function of the ornament is to embellish and to interest, and while in no way does it endeavor to express the telephone, it does have a bearing on the traditions of the site and the neighborhood in which the building stands.[41]

Walker's design theory for the Barclay-Vesey Building was based on two theories: 1) that economy, not extravagance, is the key to good modern design and 2) that only through machine technology can a modern style develop. Early designs incorporated a series of "stacked blocks connected by blunt transitions." The concept in the early planning stages appealed to Walker, but the designs initially lacked unity. Eventually, Walker achieved visual harmony through the emphatic treatment of the structure's vertical piers; Walker believed the vertical piers gave the building "dignity and style," while softening the horizontal lines of the building by extending above the rooflines of the setbacks. The piers strengthened the verticality of the design.[42]

The allocation of interior spaces was affected by the final form and massing of the Barclay-Vesey Building. Due to the nature of the communications equipment, many functions that the headquarters building needed to accommodate did not require natural light. Thus, mechanicals as well as the central communications operating system were localized in the central core of the structure, as they required artificial light rather than natural light. By concentrating these systems in the central core of the structure, office space could be situated along the exterior walls and receive natural light. By localizing different functions in such a manner, Walker was able to minimize the usually sizable light courts necessary in a building on such a large site; the limited number of light courts resulted in the opportunity to create a massive, uninterrupted base for the structure. Walker's design was further influenced by the city's intention to widen Vesey Street. The widening of Vesey Street would have reduced the size of the building's base, so Walker proposed a compromise: the construction of an arcade along Vesey Street that would incorporate a sidewalk inside the building mass, while allowing a floor plate from the second story on to cover the entire lot. The arcade was intended to combat traffic congestion that widening the street would have accomplished. Walker incorporated storefronts into the arcade design, creating what was described as "one of the most comfortable shopping fronts in New York City."[43]

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41 Walker, Ralph. "A New Architecture" in *Telephone Review* September 1926:323.
42 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:5-6.
43 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:6. An announcement in the *New York Times* on June 8, 1927 notes Arthur A. Womrath, Inc. leased a store in the arcade to use as a circulating library. This announcement suggests a wide variety of concerns leased space in the aracade.

The first ten floors of the building were designated for the use of central office space, but it took several years for all the necessary equipment to be moved in and installed. Upper floors were allocated for administrative use, with the twenty-ninth floor reserved for executive offices. The seventeenth floor divides the building into two mechanically separate sections and forms a basement for the tower. All the equipment needed to provide services to the tower are located on the seventeenth floor rather than the basement. The seventeenth floor also houses equipment typically located on the roof for the base of the building. The equipment was designed such that in an emergency, the tower equipment can service the base of the building.

For the exterior finishes, Walker chose materials such as brick (backed with terra cotta), limestone, and cast stone for their color and texture; he believed these materials would help convey a monolithic appearance while simultaneously expressing the building's mass and stability. Brick was chosen for the majority of exterior material because Walker preferred its textural qualities and subtle color variations. The ornamentation was given a vertical emphasis in order to complement the skyscraper's form and massing. Using machine production whenever possible, Walker employed cast stone ornamentation on the upper stories. Ornamentation on the lower stories was executed in limestone and displayed repeated patterns in an effort to allude to machine production. Ornamentation was also cut into stone (for better weathering of the material) in a combination of low relief and high relief to soften the rigidity of the massing and the vertical lines of the structure. Through ornamental embellishment, Walker hoped to add texture and interest to the building and visually reduce the scale of the building to a more human level. In order to engage passersby, Walker believed ornament should be "so complicated in its structure as not to be readily comprehended; its framework should be as hidden as the steel structure itself. It should repay repeated interest and study."[44] The texture and interest ornamentation provides, according to Walker, "enriches [a structure] in such a manner as to soften otherwise severe surfaces; and it makes for easy transition from one material to another." The secondary purpose of ornamentation for Walker was to "afford relief from the restlessness the mind cannot help but feel if ornament is lacking. It creates a feeling of friendliness because of its interest to the passerby."[45]

Ulysses Ricci and John DeCesare carried out the ornamentation program, which consisted of non-historical architectural motifs. The ornament, rather, drew on the history of the site and the modernity of the communication age. Fruits, vegetables, vines, marine life, birds, animals, and other natural objects were employed to allude to the Hudson River and the markets that historically occupied the site. Grapes and grapevines were used widely to represent communication, while the company's symbol (a bell) was only used occasionally on the ornamented surfaces. Walker successfully blended free-flowing, naturalistic elements with simple, geometric shapes and combined large massing with small details for a truly modern building.[46]

Construction of the headquarters' foundation began on June 20, 1923. The chosen site was largely 'made land' consisting of infill buttressed with piles of riprap (loose stones). The loose stone buttressing allowed water from the Hudson River to seep through, and once foundation digging went below the water level, the consistency of material

44 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:5-6.
45 Walker, R.T. "The Barclay-Vesey Building" *The American Architect* November 20, 1926, vol. 130, no. 2509:398.
46 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:5-6.

became slime-like. The thirty-two-story building needed to rest on bedrock, which required construction crews to build a rectangular cofferdam comprised of twenty-two caissons with interval walls to hold back the water and slime-like material while excavating for the foundation. The increased depth of the excavation necessary to hit bedrock allowed for five below ground stories, rather than the four stories that had been planned. The method of construction was innovative, using permanent steel struts thirty-eight-feet below grade rather than the usual temporary wood cross-lot bracing; this method, of which the Barclay-Vesey building is believed to be its first application, saved approximately $30,000 in construction costs.[47]

The twenty thousand tons of steel necessary for the superstructure (above and below ground) were procured from Trenton, New Jersey, and Pencoyd, Pennsylvania. J.S. McCulloh, commercial vice president, was given the honor of placing the first rivet in the structure. Six derricks were required to hoist the steel girders from the street. Four stair towers (rising to the fifteenth floor) of 351 steps each were constructed and elevator guide rails were installed as work on the steel structure advanced to facilitate worker movement during construction. The installation of floor arches began in October 1924 and progressed at the rate of one floor a week. Each floor contained enough concrete to pave a one-and-one-half mile long and five-foot wide sidewalk. In order to expedite construction, tradesmen other than steel and concrete workers commenced work as soon as conditions permitted. Stone-setters, bricklayers, plumbers, electricians, and heating and ventilating mechanics worked in overlapping periods with each other and with the concrete and steel workers. Thus, a workforce of approximately 700 men was almost constantly employed in the construction of the Barclay-Vesey Building.[48] Tradesmen, elected by their co-workers, placed the last brick and stone in the building in 1926. The first occupants entered the building on February 19, 1926, although contemporary accounts indicate the building was completed on June 30, 1926. The city Department of Buildings did not sign off on the work until April 8, 1927.[49]

Upon completion of the building, Lewis Mumford, a historian particularly well-known for his study of cities and urban architecture, believed the Barclay-Vesey Building "expresses the achievements of contemporary American architecture...better than any other skyscraper I have seen." Mumford was chiefly impressed with the building's embellishment. In describing the ornamentation, Mumford noted, "Mr. Walker has turned the lower stories into a rock garden, giving to the panels over the entrances, and to various other appropriate spots, a free naturalistic covering of birds, beasts, flowers, and children."[50]

The success of Walker's design bolstered his reputation and career, while simultaneously setting the precedent for applying a new architectural style to skyscraper design, a style defined in contemporary sources as 'Modernistic' (although by the 1960s and 1970s, the term Art Deco had replaced 'Modernistic'). The term Modernistic reflected its basis in the current or modern zoning law, as well as the ingenuity or newness of the designs. The bold massing and setback form, vertical emphasis, and non-historical ornamentation used by Walker came to define Modernistic design

47 *Telephone Review* September 1926:327.
48 *Telephone Review* September 1926:330.
49 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:8.
50 "The Man Behind Manhattan's Deco Mountains" *New York Times* April 21, 1991:H36.

and were used by many American architects in subsequent skyscraper designs.[51] Seen as a distinctly American and modern style, major corporations commissioned buildings in this idiom to project a contemporary image that would appeal to consumers and clients.[52]

ART DECO THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES

'Modernistic' styles, especially Art Deco, began to gain mainstream notice in the early 1920s with the *Chicago Tribune* design competition. In 1922, the *Chicago Tribune* held a competition open to architects worldwide in an effort to solicit the best design for their new headquarters building in Chicago. Although, first place went to a Gothic-inspired design, the second place design exhibited the emerging Art Deco style and garnered much attention from the architectural community (Figure 7). The architect of the second place design was Finnish-born Eliel Saarinen. The design was widely publicized and much of the architectural community believed Saarinen's design should have placed first. Following the *Chicago Tribune* competition, Art Deco quickly spread across the United States as the fashionable design of the 1920s and was employed almost exclusively in commercial and civic structures; with the exception of luxury apartment buildings, Art Deco made little impact on residential architecture. The style is characterized by smooth wall surfaces, which are often finished with stucco. Ornamentation often includes zigzags, chevrons, and other stylized and geometric motifs. Art Deco buildings often use the vocabulary of towers and other vertical projections above rooflines to give the structures a vertical emphasis.[53]

Art Deco stood in stark contrast the other prevailing style of the early 1920s – stripped Classicism. Stripped Classicism strove to display the power of simplified geometrical forms by removing details characteristic of traditional building forms. These designs, while powerful in their geometry, often created somber images. Art Deco, on the other hand, sought to capture the energy and sensuality of the Jazz Age through ornamentation while employing simplified geometrical forms. This style initially developed in Europe as an amalgam of several sources: simplified Classical forms from the pre-war Viennese Secession movement, dynamic shapes such as zigzags, sunbursts, and dramatic angles from Italian Futurism and German Expressionism, and the opulence and frivolous mood of the period. These ideas converged in the early 1920s and coalesced at the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris. The exposition gave Art Deco (derived from *Arts Decoratifs*) wide-ranging exposure outside the architectural and design community, which had been experimenting with the style for years prior to the exposition.[54]

Art Deco spread across the United States during the mid- to late-1920s, rapidly becoming the style of choice for company headquarters, hotels, apartment buildings, and civic structures. Business and commercial interests in the United States especially liked Art Deco because it expressed progress and modern efficiency. The style also produced

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51 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:7.
52 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 239: Barclay-Vesey Building*," October 1, 1991:4-5.
53 McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002:465.
54 Gelernter, Mark. *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Cultural and Technological Context.* Hanover: University of New England Press, 1999: 241-242.

distinctive architectural images that businesses could employ to create equally distinct corporate images in a period of increased marketing and advertising. The Chrysler Building (1928-1930; National Historic Landmark), constructed after the completion of the Barclay-Vesey Building, is an excellent example of Art Deco architecture creating a distinctive corporate image. The building, designed by William Van Alen, employed ornamentation alluding to the products sold by Chrysler, such as stylized gargoyles meant to look like hood ornaments. The building's metal cap and spire project a sense of energy and movement.[55]

There are numerous extant examples of Art Deco skyscrapers in major cities throughout the United States. In Chicago, the thirty-seven story 1927-1929 Palmolive Building (designated a Chicago landmark in 2000 and listed in the National Register in 2003) was constructed as the corporate headquarters for Palmolive soap. The building features setbacks and vertical massing while employing vocabulary from the Art Deco idiom. The Bullocks Wilshire Department Store (listed in the National Register in 1978), located on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, was constructed in 1929. The department store features a 241-foot tower setback from the base of the building and adorned with vertical piers and copper sheathing. Miami Beach has an extensive collection of Art Deco buildings that have been recognized in the form of local historic districts: Espanola Way, Collins / Washington Avenues, Museum, and Flamingo Park; these local districts merged to form the Miami Beach Architectural District (listed in the National Register in 1979), which is also known as the Miami Beach Art Deco District.

While cities such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami have long been regarded as centers of Art Deco architecture, the style permeated smaller Midwestern towns such as Tulsa, which is also recognized as one of the nation's premier centers of art deco architecture. Popular in Tulsa beginning in the late-1920s, there are several fine examples of the style such as the 1928 Oklahoma Natural Gas Building (listed in the National Register in 1984), which rises eleven stories and the 1931 Tulsa Union Depot, an important civic structure, which was rehabilitated in 1983 and again in 2007. Further examples of the style exist in Dallas, Texas, with the 1936 Dallas Fair Park (listed in the National Register in 1986), in Syracuse, New York, with the Niagara Mohawk Building (1932), and in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with the twenty-one-story Wisconsin Gas Company Building.

THE BARCLAY-VESEY BUILDING TODAY

Over time, the amount and size of telephone equipment required to provide service to its customers forced the New York Telephone Company to sacrifice office space in order to house the necessary equipment. By 1972, the reorganization of space within the Barclay-Vesey Building prompted the New York Telephone Company to move the executive offices from the Barclay-Vesey Building to 1095 Avenue of the Americas at 42nd Street. The Barclay-Vesey Building continued to house central offices providing service to its customers but was no longer considered the company headquarters. By the early 1990s, technological advances in digital switching systems resulted in the decreasing size of telephone-related equipment, which allowed the company to reclaim office space and move more workers back into the building.[56]

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55 Gelernter, Mark. *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Cultural and Technological Context.* Hanover: University of New England Press, 1999: 24s.
56 "New Technology, Old Architecture" *New York Times* October 20, 1991:R15.

The New York Telephone Company remained a subsidiary of AT&T until AT&T's January 1984 breakup. Following the breakup, New York Telephone, along with the New England Telephone & Telegraph Company, became part of a Regional Bell operation company named NYNEX. In 1997, Bell Atlantic acquired NYNEX. Three years later, Bell Atlantic acquired GTE, effectively forming the current make up of Verizon Communications. From 1972 to 2006, headquarters of the New York Telephone Company (now Verizon Communications) remained at the Avenue of the Americas location. In 2006, Verizon relocated its corporate headquarters to the Barclay-Vesey Building following the building's rehabilitation, including the refurbishment of the executive offices. Verizon also relocated its major operations hub (the Verizon Center) into the former AT&T headquarters building in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.[57]

Surviving the World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001, the Barclay-Vesey Building remains an important structure in the history of skyscraper architecture, and continues to have a dramatic presence on Manhattan's skyline. The rehabilitation of the building has played an important role in the rebirth of the Lower Manhattan.

57 "Corporate History" http://investor.verizon.com/profile/history/index.aspx?tabId=1. Accessed 21 October 2008.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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
_X_ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
_X_ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property ___1.1 acres___

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	583375	4507422	3	__	_____	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

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.)

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Barclay-Vesey Building, located at 140 West Street, is situated on Block 84, Lot 1 in the Financial District in the Borough of Manhattan. The skyscraper occupies a parallelogram-shaped lot bounded by Barclay, Washington, Vesey, and West streets. See attached map showing the legal property boundaries.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Since its construction between 1923 and 1927, the Barclay-Vesey Building has been legally associated with Block 84, Lot 1 in the Borough of Manhattan. Barclay, Washington, Vesey, and West streets bound Block 84, Lot 1.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Breiseth, Associate

organization MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC date November 2008

street & number 1400 16th Street, NW Suite 420 telephone (202) 483-2020

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20036

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 the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Verizon New York, Inc.

street & number 140 West Street telephone (212) 321-8880

city or town New York state NY zip code 10007

==========

Date of Photographs: November 2008

Photographer: Elizabeth Breiseth
MacRostie Historic Advisors LLC
1400 16th Street, NW, Suite 420
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 483-2020

Digital images on file at MacRostie Historic Advisors LLC.

1. Looking east toward the west elevation
2. Looking east toward the upper stories of the west elevation
3. Looking east toward the west elevation entrance
4. Detail, ornamentation on the west elevation entrance
5. Looking southeast toward the north and west elevations
6. Detail of a storefront window on the north elevation
7. Detail of second story windows on the north elevation
8. Looking west toward the east and north elevations
9. Detail of setbacks on east and north elevations
10. Detail of the roofline and ornamentation on the east and north elevations
11. Detail of lintel and spandrel panel on the east elevation
12. Looking west toward the east elevation entrance
13. Detail of light fixture at the east elevation entrance
14. Looking west toward the Vesey Street pedestrian arcade
15. Detail of pedestrian arcade
16. Lobby, looking east toward Washington Street
17. Lobby, elevator bank
18. Lobby, looking west toward West Street

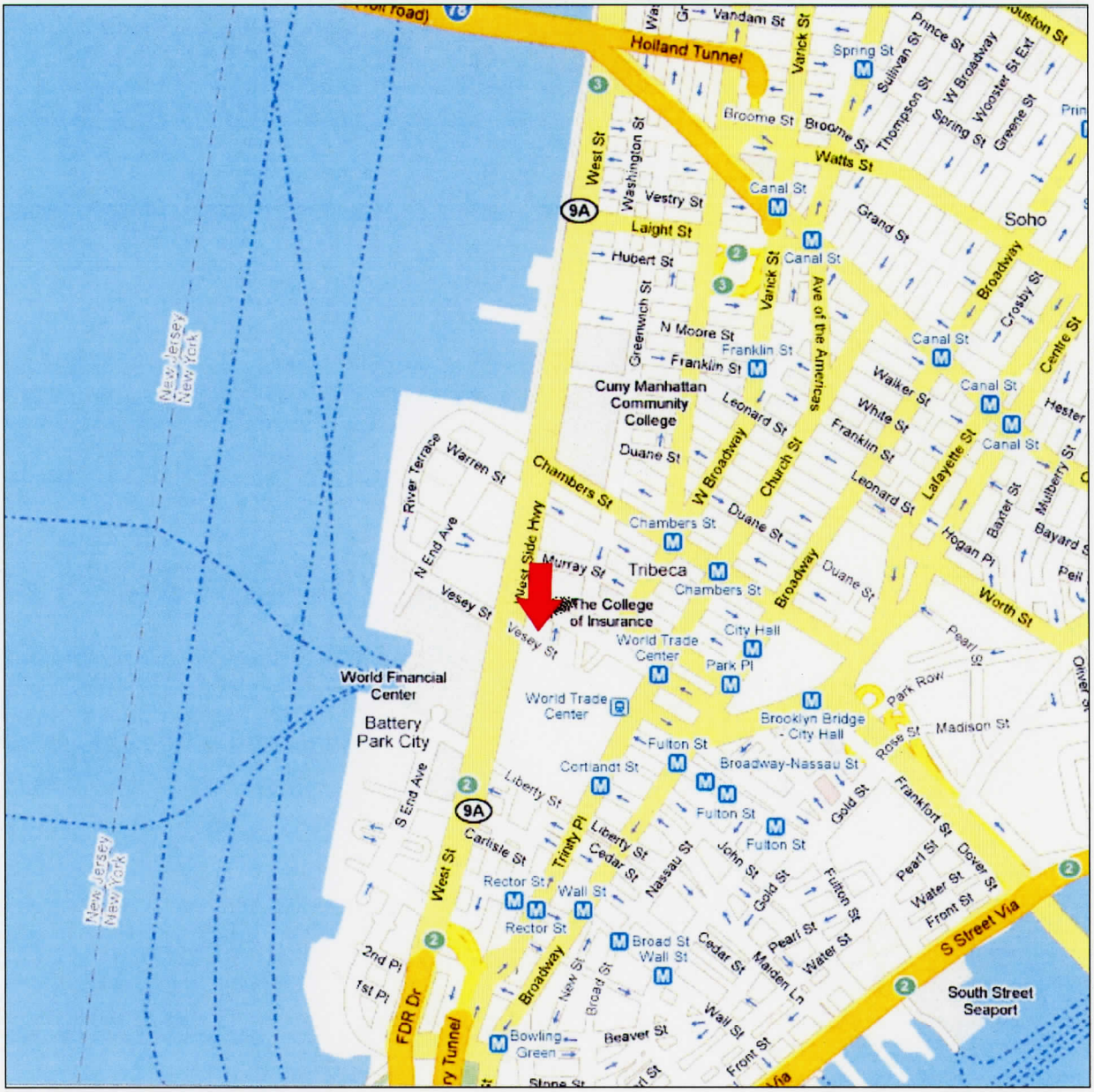


Figure 1: Location Map, 140 West Street, New York City, New York

Figure 2: Barclay-Vesey Building, West Elevation (floors 3-32)

Figure 3: The Barclay-Vesey Building circa 1927 from *The Architect* March 1927

Figure 4: Western Union Building (1928-1930) from http://www.nyc-architecture.com/SOH/SOH016.htm

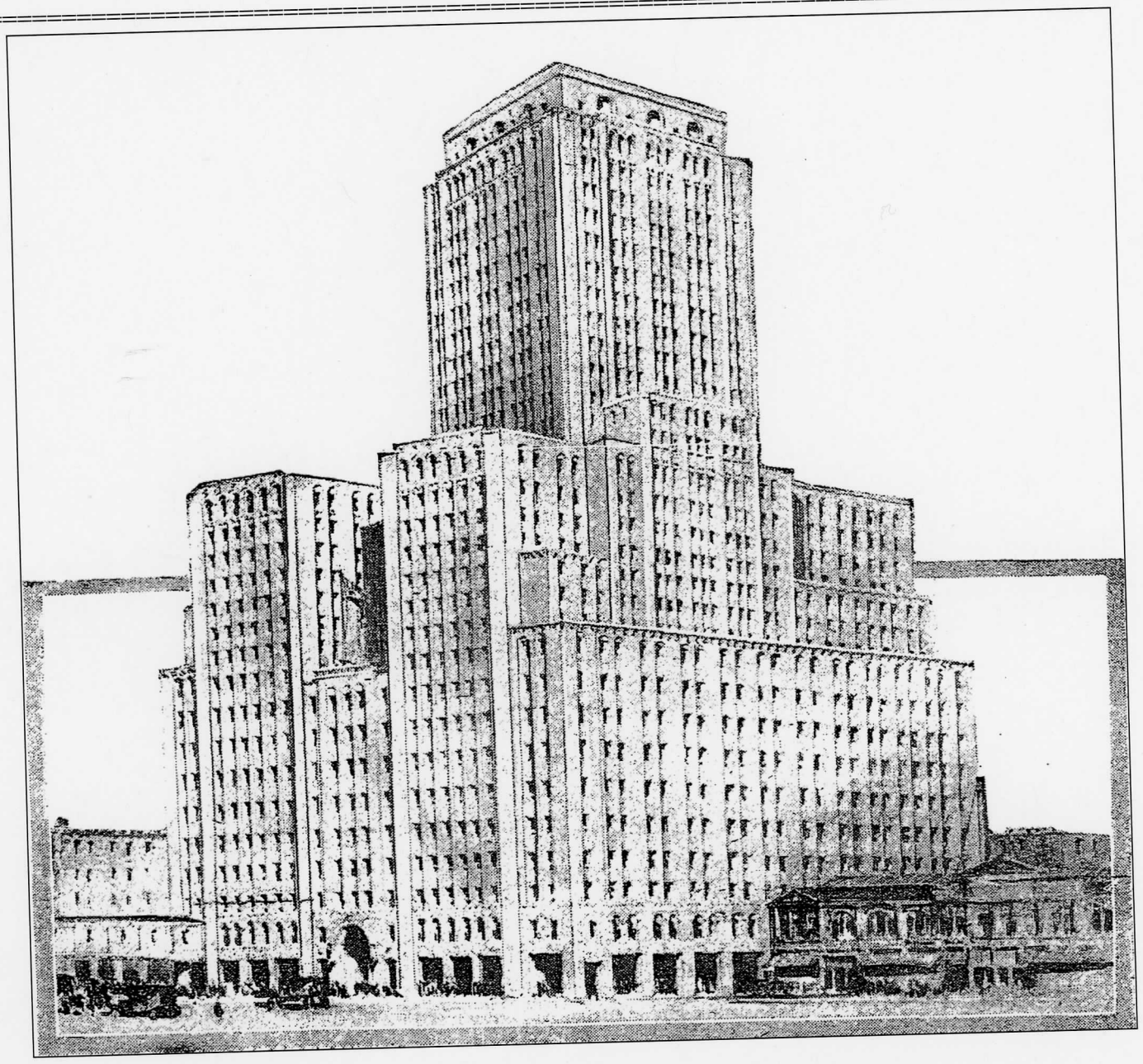


Figure 5: New York Telephone Company Building rendering published in the *New York Times* April 1, 1923

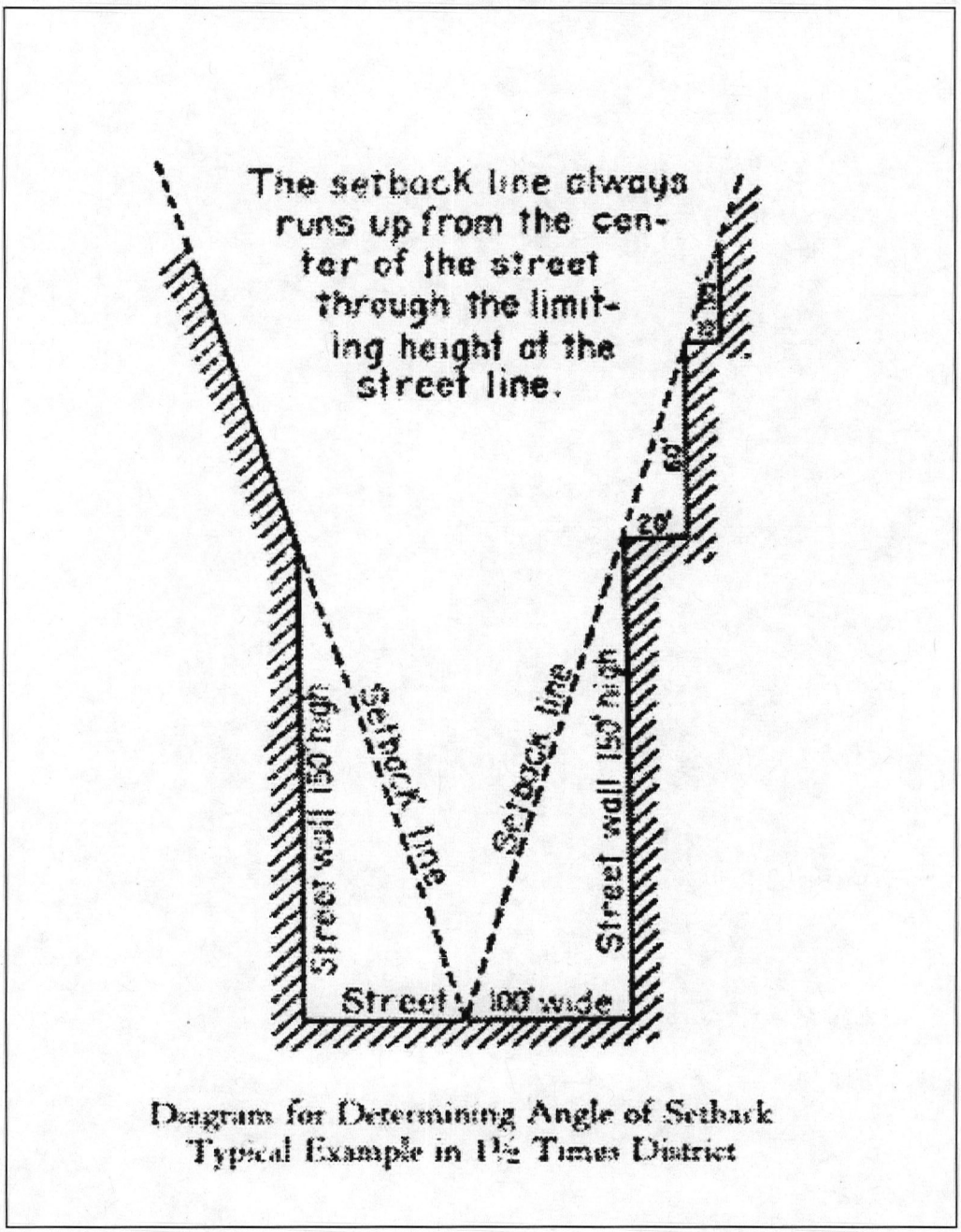
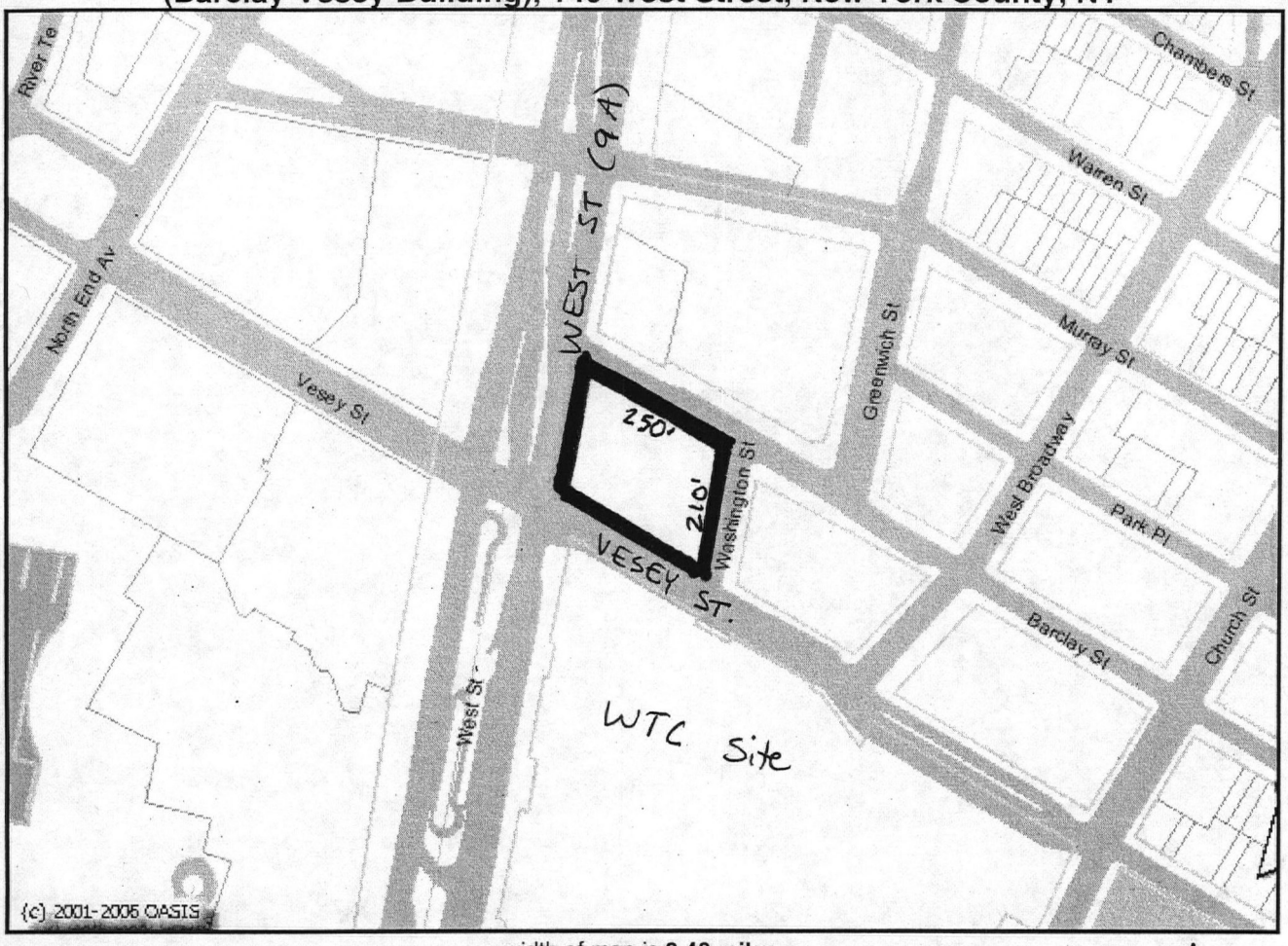


Figure 6: Determining Setbacks under 1916 zoning regulations from http://www.manhattan2050.com/urban.html

Figure 7: Eliel Saarinen design for the 1922 Chicago Tribune competition

New York Telephone Company Building

(Barclay-Vesey Building), 140 West Street, New York County, NY



width of map is **0.40 miles**.

Streets
Cemeteries
Baseball/Soccer Fields
Block/Lot Boundaries
Tennis/Basketball Courts & Tracks

N

nyc oasis

Map provided by the **Open Accessible Space Information System (www.OASISnyc.net)** of New York City

Map accessed 12/30/08
Scale: 1" = approx. 250'
Nomination boundary indicated by dark line.
Block 84, Lot 1, Manhattan

Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 1, 1991; Designation List 239
LP-1745

BARCLAY-VESEY BUILDING,

140 West Street, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1923-1927, Ralph Walker of McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 84, Lot 1.

On September 19, 1989, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Barclay-Vesey Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 31). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The Commission received one letter in support of designation. At the public hearing, a representative of the owner indicated that the owner was unsure of its position. Subsequently, the owner indicated it would not oppose designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The Barclay-Vesey Building of the New York Telephone Company (also known as the New York Telephone Building) was the first major work of prominent New York architect Ralph Walker. Constructed in 1923-27 and built at a time of great progress and transition in American design, it was a product of the atmosphere of architectural creativity and originality which flourished in New York in the 1920s. A pivotal structure in the history of skyscraper architecture, it is a prototypical example of what came to be regarded as the American Art Deco style. Intended to be completely modern in every feature and detail, from its form, generated by its parallelogram-shaped site and contemporary zoning restrictions, to its construction techniques, materials, unconventional ornament, and style, Walker's design for "the largest telephone company building in the world"[1] was an emphatic statement of the most recent architectural trends. The building, designed to be "as modern as the telephone activity it houses . . . [was] a simple, straightforward solution" to the requirements of the building program.[2] The progressive design of the building was envisioned by company president, Howard F. Thurber, and resulted in a grand statement of his company's size, strength, and success. The overall effect of Walker's Barclay-Vesey Building is one of strong form and bold silhouette, with its blunt setback transitions articulated by vertical buttress-like piers and massive form relieved by intricate, animated ornament. Substantially intact, the building continues to be a dramatic presence on Manhattan's skyline.

Site History

The block bounded by Barclay and Vesey Streets at the north and south and Washington and West Streets at the east and west was originally located beyond the present shoreline of the Hudson River. (Fig. 1) The waterfront along the west side of Manhattan was developed beginning early in the nineteenth century. As part of the improvement, the banks of the Hudson were filled in, extended, and raised, and piers were constructed at the western end of every street between Vesey and King Streets by the late 1830s.[3] Crucial to the city's mercantile expansion, the improvements helped New York City to achieve recognition as the country's major port and trading center by the 1830s and 1840s. This area and the section of the city just to the north, now known as Tribeca, were transformed into a center for dairy goods, produce, and less perishable goods including tobacco, imported woods, coffee, and spices. Markets for these items were developed in the area close to the docks to facilitate the handling of the commodities. First established in 1812 and repeatedly expanded, the Washington Market, located on the block bounded by West, Washington, Vesey, and Fulton Streets, just south of the Barclay-Vesey Building, grew to be Manhattan's major wholesale and retail produce outlet.[4] Many other buildings were constructed in the area to accommodate the food industry, including approximately thirty-five three-, four-, and five-story brick buildings on the site chosen for the telephone company's headquarters. The activities of the merchants, so important to the site and to the surrounding area, would later be recalled in the ornamental program of the Barclay-Vesey Building. The site was chosen over more popular office locations to the east on Broadway because it was much less expensive. The West Street frontage was considered an asset because it was assumed that the structures along the docks would never rise above two or three stories and the future building's western exposure would, therefore, always remain unobstructed.

The New York Telephone Company

The telephone business developed rapidly following the early successes of Alexander Graham Bell's inventions in the 1870s. By the turn of the century the American Telephone & Telegraph Company had become the central institution of Bell Telephone Company operations, with smaller companies, including the New York Telephone Company, conducting its regional services.

After a sluggish period of business during World War I the New York Telephone Company faced a new period of rapid expansion. In an effort to organize and control the growth, the company decided to establish divisional headquarters throughout the state. A reassessment of the company's organization in New York City concluded that its personnel, offices, and equipment were inefficiently scattered city-wide. Howard Ford Thurber (1869-1928), president of the New York Telephone Company from 1919 to 1924, determined that a new central headquarters building would alleviate the problems associated with the company's lack of unity. Thurber's "vision," as it was called in his *New York Times* obituary, was to create a building large enough to "satisfy the [company's] present demands and to reasonably anticipate future requirements."[5] The new headquarters building would consolidate an equipment and administrative center, incorporating six central offices. As explained in a Telephone Company pamphlet, central offices

> are the nerve centers of the [telephone] system. Here the wires from the local telephones and from other central offices converge and are carried to distributing frames, where they fan out to the proper points of contact on the switchboards.[6]

Thurber's building program required a large utilitarian facility with specialized mechanical features and space for a centralized work force of 6,000 employees serving 120,000 telephones. Undaunted by the numerous details of the project, Thurber envisioned not just the practical concerns of the building but its potential symbolic quality as well. A large structure, progressively designed, could establish a positive corporate image and symbolize the size and strength of the organization -- an industry whose work was clearly at the forefront of modern technology. With Thurber's plan for a new headquarters building, the New York Telephone Company was established at the vanguard of modern trends in business and architecture.

Ralph Walker and McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin

For the design of its headquarters building, the New York Telephone Company chose McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin, an architectural firm whose long history with the telephone company began in 1885 with the firm's founding partner Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz (1853-1921). Eidlitz was commissioned by the Metropolitan Telephone and Telegraph Company, the predecessor of the New York Telephone Company, in that year to design its first headquarters building at 18 Cortlandt Street in Manhattan.[7] Andrew McKenzie (1861-1926), born in Dunkirk, New York, and educated in Buffalo, came to New York City in 1884 and worked for the firm of Babb, Cook & Willard. He became associated with Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz in 1902 and the partnership of Eidlitz & McKenzie was active from 1905 to 1909. That firm's major work was the New York Times Building at Times Square.[8] Stephen Voorhees (1879-1965) was born near Rocky Hill, New Jersey, and was educated as a civil engineer at Princeton University, graduating in 1900. In 1902 he began to practice with Eidlitz & McKenzie as an engineer and superintendent of construction; one of his first jobs was the supervision of the foundation work for the New York Times Building. German-born Paul Gmelin (1859-1937) studied in Stuttgart. He came to the United States as a draftsman, was briefly associated with McKim, Mead & White, and then joined the firm of Babb, Cook & Willard, where he met Andrew McKenzie.

In 1910 the firm of McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin was organized and continued Eidlitz's successful relationship with the telephone company, gaining numerous commissions for buildings throughout New York state. By 1912 the firm had completed approximately thirty new telephone buildings in New York City alone (not counting alterations and expansions).[9] The firm also designed the Brooklyn Edison Company Building and the Brooklyn Municipal Building, as well as private residences. McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin was active through 1925.

In 1919 Ralph Walker (1889-1973) joined the office of McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin. Born in Waterbury, Connecticut, Walker began a two-year apprenticeship with the Providence, Rhode Island, architectural firm of Hilton & Jackson in 1907 and then studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In Montreal in 1911 Walker studied with Francis Swales (1878-1962) who had established architectural firms in London, Montreal, and Vancouver, British Columbia, and later moved his practice to New York. In 1913 Walker practiced with James Ritchie in Boston and three years later won the Rotch Traveling Scholarship. (His two-year trip to Italy was postponed by the war, during which he served in France with the Army Corps of Engineers.) Walker also worked as a designer in the offices of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and York & Sawyer.

Walker's first major project with McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin was the Barclay-Vesey Building.[10] The appearance of the Barclay-Vesey Building, unlike anything previously produced by the firm, and the general success of the design, established Walker's reputation. Near the completion of the building and following the death of McKenzie, Walker rose to partnership in the firm of Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker. Considered the firm's main designer, Walker continued to produce designs for the American Telephone & Telegraph Company, becoming a specialist in the design of that industry's buildings. Subsequent commissions whose designs were based on concepts first developed in the Barclay-Vesey Building were the New Jersey Bell Headquarters (Newark, 1928-29), the Western Union Building at 60 Hudson Street (1928-30), and telephone buildings in Syracuse and Rochester. The Irving Trust Company Building at 1 Wall Street (1929-31) and the Long Distance Building of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company at 32 Sixth Avenue (1930-32) followed soon after. (The Western Union Building and the Long Distance Building are designated New York City Landmarks.) Walker also designed buildings for other corporate clients including General Foods and IBM, and several pavilions for firms at the 1939 World's Fair in New York. The success of Walker's corporate commissions brought him recognition as one of the city's most prominent designers of Art Deco skyscrapers.

Active in professional circles, Walker was president of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1933 to 1935, president of the Architectural League from 1937 to 1939, and president of the national organization of the American Institute of Architects from 1949 to 1951. In 1957 the AIA gave Walker the title of "architect of the century." In 1958 Walker resigned from active participation in the firm, then known as Voorhees, Walker,

Smith, Smith & Haines, but continued in the capacity of a consultant. He later served on the Fine Arts Commission (appointed in 1959 by President Eisenhower), as president of the Municipal Art Society, and as editor of *Pencil Points*. His firm continued in various forms after his retirement and is today known as Haines, Lundberg & Waehler.

Zoning and the Creation of a Modern Style

The 1916 Building Zone Resolution had a tremendous impact on architecture in New York City; the final form and appearance of the Barclay-Vesey Building owe much to this law. Overbuilding, increased building heights, and related problems such as a decrease in the amount of sunlight at street level, were the factors which created the need for the ordinance. The *Building Zone Handbook* (1916) stated that the purpose of the law was

> to stabilize and conserve property values, to relieve the rapidly increasing congestion in the streets and in the transit lines, to provide greater safety in buildings and in the streets, and in general to make the city more beautiful, convenient and agreeable.[11]

The restrictions created to bring about the "more beautiful city" were based on the use of building setbacks to control height and bulk.[12] Height and setback regulations applied to seventy-five percent of the site; the remaining portion of the building site was unlimited in height, encouraging developers to assemble large building sites to make tower construction more affordable, possibly even profitable. The building shape that resulted from the zoning restrictions took the form of a ziggurat, a rhythmic succession of blocks which grew smaller and more recessed from bottom to top. The ziggurat was then topped by a tower or a pair of towers.

While the creators of the 1916 zoning resolution were motivated by purely practical concerns, architects drew inspiration from the building forms which resulted from the restrictions. In 1922, architect and critic Harvey Wiley Corbett (1873-1954) and architectural renderer Hugh Ferris (1889-1962) explored the possibilities of the zoning law in a series of drawings which illustrated progressive stages of design based on the law's restrictions. (Fig. 2) The drawings showed 1) the maximum allowable bulk of the building and its form under the zoning law, 2) the addition of necessary light courts to the basic block, 3) the impact of structural limitations, and 4) economic considerations. Finally, Ferris and Corbett presented drawings of an architecturally "trimmed" design.[13] These dramatic renderings, published in *Pencil Points* (1923) and in *Metropolis of Tomorrow* (1929), significantly influenced architects of the day. The drawings and the laws from which they came directed the architects' attention to the building as a whole rather than to a single facade of the structure, thus altering the whole design process. By visualizing buildings "from every possible angle" the architect was transformed from a designer of facades into a "sculptor in building masses."[14]

The zoning law provided architects with a sound, rational basis for the form and appearance of the skyscraper as well as a new source of creativity; historical styles did not seem to express this modern sensibility and, consequently, a new "skyscraper style" emerged in the 1920s. William A. Starrett (1877-1932), an engineer, builder and architect, acknowledged the effect of the zoning law in his book, *Skyscrapers and the Men Who Build Them*, a short history of the skyscraper and related topics, and said its effect was "to give to architectural design in high buildings the greatest impetus it ever has known and to produce a new and beautiful pyramidal skyline. . . ."[15] Major characteristics of the new style, as generated by the zoning restrictions, were sculpted massing, bold setbacks, and ornament subordinated to the overall mass. Clearly reflecting the current interest of the designers, the new style was commonly called "Modernistic." Corbett praised the new "setback style" and predicted it would "go down in history along with the Gothic, the Classic, and the Renaissance."[16] The dramatic rendering style of Ferriss and others expressed the new, vertically-oriented, modernistic aesthetic. A rendering by Chester B. Price of the completed Barclay-Vesey Building captures the drama and the energy of the style and the time. (Fig. 3)

The Modernistic style generated additional interest as architects identified it as a distinctively American style. American businesses capitalized on the status achieved by the modern skyscraper. Increasingly, large corporations, such as the

American Telephone & Telegraph Company, chose the skyscraper as the home for their operations, believing a massive skyscraper in a modern style could symbolize their success and progressiveness and project a positive image for their companies.

The Chicago Tribune Company capitalized on the concept of the skyscraper as corporate image for its widely-publicized and much-entered architectural competition of 1922. The competition for the "most beautiful skyscraper in the world" to house the Tribune's new headquarters had a great impact on American architecture. The first place winners, Raymond Hood (1881-1934) and John Mead Howells (1868-1959), produced a relatively conservative design with Gothic-inspired ornament. The design of the second place winner, Eliel Saarinen (1873-1950), was the highly regarded public favorite and was promoted for its vertical emphasis, setback transitions, and abstracted ornament. (Fig. 4a) These elements appeared in numerous subsequent skyscrapers, including the Barclay-Vesey Building, and critics have traditionally cited Saarinen's entry as the source for Walker's design. However, Walker's own entry for the Tribune Competition, which received an award of Honorable Mention, also exhibits strongly emphasized vertical piers and a form composed of a tower on a base with setback transitions.[17] (Fig. 4b) An additional similarity between Walker's Tribune entry and an early design of the Barclay-Vesey Building is the pyramidal roof that caps the buildings in both designs. (Fig. 5) Walker's Tribune entry was due on November 1, 1922; the winner was announced on December 3. Plans for the Barclay-Vesey Building were filed at the Department of Buildings on June 6, 1923.[18] Considering the size of the building, it is not unlikely that Walker had begun its design by the Fall of 1922, and was working on both projects at the same time. Therefore, Walker's experimentation with vertical emphasis and setback tower forms in his Tribune entry seems to have played an important role in his conception of the Barclay-Vesey Building.

Design of the Barclay-Vesey Building

Walker's Design Theory. Walker's version of the modern skyscraper, as seen in the Barclay-Vesey Building, was based on two simple theories: 1) economy, not extravagance, is the key to good modern design, and 2) only through machine technology can a modern style develop.[19] Walker was one of many designers who focused on the importance of modern technology and its role in the expression of the new style. Corbett summarized the trend: "The modern architect... must learn to use the machine as a basis of design if his work is to be indigenous to this period."[20] Walker even conceived of the Barclay-Vesey Building "as a machine which had definite functions to perform for the benefit of its occupants."[21] This pragmatic approach to the problem of design was a direct response to the functionalism inspired by the zoning law.

Walker's theoretical analysis of skyscraper design found a physical form in the Barclay-Vesey Building where he attempted to utilize building materials to express modern technology. The majority of the exterior material is brick, a material which Walker preferred for its textural qualities and subtle color variations, and is embellished throughout by stone ornament. Taking advantage of machine production wherever possible, ornament for the upper stories was executed in cast stone. Ornament at the lower stories was executed in limestone, but ornamental motifs were used in repeated patterns as a further expression of machine production. In addition, these materials, given their colors and textures, were chosen to convey a monolithic appearance and to express stability and mass.

Preliminary designs for the Barclay-Vesey Building focused on the size of the structure. Designs for buildings of ten, sixteen, twenty-six, thirty-six, and forty-two stories were drawn to study the relationship between cost and height. It was understood that the taller the building, the less the cost per square foot of the land; however, Walker had to take into consideration the increase of the construction costs with greater heights, as well as the market value of similar space. The thirty-two-story tower, incorporating required setbacks at the tenth and eighteenth stories, was determined to be most economical on all counts.[22] Another set of studies focused on developing the sculptural form of the building. (Fig. 5) Early designs showed a series of stacked blocks connected by blunt transitions. This concept appealed to Walker, but early designs using the concept lacked unity. Visual harmony was ultimately achieved through the emphatic treatment of the structure's vertical

piers, which Walker believed also gave the building "dignity and a style."[23] The piers softened the horizontal lines and, continuing above the rooflines of the setbacks, visually strengthened the overall verticality of the design.

The final form of the building was significantly affected by the allocation of interior spaces. Many functions to be accommodated in the headquarters building did not require natural light. For example, mechanical space was held to the central core of the structure, as was the space for the central operating system which required artificial light. As a result, it was possible to locate office space, where natural light was preferred, along the exterior wall. Consequently, the sizable light courts usually necessary in a building on such a large site were limited, resulting in the opportunity to create a massive base for the structure. The size of the base was also affected by the city's desire to widen Vesey Street. Walker introduced an arcade as a compromise solution; he incorporated the sidewalk inside the building mass, thus providing a larger base for the building. He considered this a pioneering attempt to combat traffic congestion and as the first of many such arcades to be built in the city. Incorporating storefronts into the design, the arcade was described upon its completion as "one of the most comfortable shopping fronts in New York City."[24]

Walker experimented with different stylistic expressions for the building, including Gothic and Italian Renaissance, but grew unsatisfied with his attempts to adapt such traditional styles to a building which was being shaped by purely practical concerns. Coming to terms with this incompatibility, Walker attempted "to treat the problem for its own sake, to make it as modern in conception as the telephone activity it houses."[25] He thus began his successful studies in the Modernistic style.

The Ornamental Program. For Walker, ornamental embellishment was needed to add texture and interest in a large building, and to reduce the scale of the mass to a more human level. To engage the passerby, Walker believed the ornament should be "so complicated in its structure as not to be readily comprehended; its framework should be as hidden as the steel structure itself. It should repay repeated interest and study. . . ."[26] As to the actual content of the ornament, he believed that overly-used traditional motifs, such as the egg and dart, had lost all significance to the modern viewer. The ornament executed on the Barclay-Vesey Building met all of Walker's standards concerning texture, complexity, and unconventionalism. To complement the overall design, the ornament was given a vertical emphasis. It did not project from the wall surface but rather was cut into the stone for better weathering of the material. The desired texture of the ornament was achieved in a combination of low relief and high relief which resulted in the softening of the rigidity of the massing and of the strict vertical lines of the structure.

The sculptural ornament of the Barclay-Vesey Building was carried out by Ulysses Ricci (1888-1960) and John DeCesare. Born in New York, Ricci studied at Cooper Union, the Art Students League, and with James Earl Fraser. He designed medals for the American Numismatic Society and executed sculptural work for many buildings in New York, including the Bowery Savings Bank and a series of bronze plaques for the Times Square Schrafft's restaurant. For a time he was a member of the firm Ricci & Zari. John DeCesare was a member of the National Sculpture Society and for a time was a member of the firm Stifter & DeCesare.

Walker attempted to express the modernity of the telephone industry by casting aside all traditional ornamental forms. Thus, the ornament has no basis in historic architectural styles; instead it recalls the history and traditions of the site and surrounding area. Fruits, vegetables, vines with leaves, marine life, birds, small animals, and other natural objects populate the ornamented surfaces and recall the nearby Hudson River and the market area which earlier occupied the site. The lower stories of the building are so filled with ornament that Lewis Mumford called them "a rock garden."[27] While the ornament was not intended to symbolize the telephone specifically, the use of grapes and grapevines can be seen as a representation of communication. In addition, an occasional bell, the company symbol, is found in the ornamented surfaces.

Walker called his ornament "free and flowing,"[28] a description which in many ways contradicts the strict rigidity of his overall design. However, the blending of complicated ornament with simple forms, naturalistic elements with geometric shapes, and large massing with small

details can be seen as one of Walker's major triumphs. The synthesis of these elements allows the Barclay-Vesey Building to be admired both from a distance and from a closer perspective.

Walker's theory of ornament and its execution in the Barclay-Vesey Building was called "straightforward and appropriate and eminently right."[29] Praise for the building's ornament was not restricted to the exterior. By repeating the vertical emphasis and ornamental patterning on the interior, Walker achieved a continuity between interior and exterior design which was unusual at the time; many contemporary buildings which appeared modern on the exterior still reverted to historical styles on the interior. Mumford saw this compatibility between interior and exterior as a perpetuation of the work of H.H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright,[30] and he credited Walker as the first since Sullivan to carry through a significant scheme of decoration.[31] In fact, many aspects of Walker's ornament -- the textural quality, the complicated all-over patterning, the non-historicist subjects, the combination of naturalistic and geometric elements, and the synthesis of flowing ornament with geometric building forms -- were used by Sullivan and came to be seen as hallmarks of his style. Buildings such as the Carson Pirie Scott Department Store (Chicago, 1899-1904) and the Transportation Building at the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893) clearly illustrate Sullivan's use of these techniques.

The Stylistic Context of the Barclay-Vesey Building. The bold geometric massing of the Barclay-Vesey Building, its set-back form, its emphasis on verticality, and its flattened non-historical ornamental program all combine to make the building a prototypical example of what came to be known as the American Art Deco style. The Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels in Paris, which opened in 1925 after much of the design of the Barclay-Vesey Building had been completed, disseminated many of these elements which had been pioneered by Walker: abstracted naturalistic and geometric ornament in all-over patterns, linear and vertical emphasis in design, streamlined forms, and dramatic juxtaposition of colors and textures of materials. These elements were used by numerous American architects for subsequent set-back skyscraper designs. Reaching its zenith between 1928 and 1931 in New York City this new architectural style was called "Modernistic" in contemporary sources. By the time of its critical re-assessment in the 1960s and '70s the style had achieved the popular name of Art Deco.[32] Taking into account the source of the term Art Deco and the timing of the design, it is accurate to call the style of the Barclay-Vesey Building "Modernistic." "Modern Perpendicular," another contemporary stylistic term, calls attention to the vertical emphasis of the design. Walker clearly expressed his view of the building's modern style and its origin:

> It was Emerson, I think, who told us to stop building the sepulchers of our fathers and build our own house. The Barclay-Vesey building is an attempt to build a house of today. A house that is not Greek or Gothic, or Mayan; that looks little to the past, much to the present, and tries to glimpse the future.[33]

Contemporary Reactions

The Barclay-Vesey Building was hailed in its day as the ultimate modern skyscraper. Critics commented on all aspects of its design and construction. The Telephone Company was pleased with the result of its new headquarters building, calling it "a symbol of service and progress" and a "graphic example of [the] movement in modern telephony."[34] In addition, the building became a model for subsequent telephone headquarters in New York State, including the South State Street Building in Syracuse (1928). The wide acceptance of the building as a symbol of modern architecture was confirmed when its photograph was used as a frontispiece in the English translation of Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture.* The Architectural League of New York awarded the building its Gold Medal of Honor in 1927.

Many critics were struck by the size and form of the building. Corbett described it as "a building clean limbed and sure footed, rising with sheer, cliff-like walls."[35] Joseph Pennell, an etcher struck by New York's skyscrapers, proclaimed it "the most impressive modern building in the world."[36] Talbot Hamlin anticipated a prominent place in architectural history for the structure: "The whole building is destined to be a monument of American progress in architecture."[37] Still

other accounts commented on the elusive qualities of the design, citing the ability of its "rugged beauty" to "hold one breathless with its force."[38] Mumford commended its thorough design, calling it "one of the few skyscrapers that [could] bear close inspection."[39] Corbett agreed:

> The Telephone Building is worth the careful study of every modern architect, and should receive the admiration of every layman. Let it be hoped that it stands at the dawn of a new day, both for architects that sin, and the public that is sinned against.[40]

Construction[41]

Demolition of the existing buildings on the site was begun on May 23, 1923, and was completed on July 14. Foundation work was begun on June 20, 1923. Due to the instability of the land fill on the site, an elaborate system was created for the construction of the foundations which required twenty-two caissons sunk to bedrock at the perimeter of the site. The depth of the excavations allowed for five stories below ground, one more than had been originally planned. An innovative construction method was utilized thirty-eight feet below grade as permanent steel struts were substituted for temporary wooden cross-lot bracing at a savings of approximately $30,000. This was believed to be the first use of this construction method. The steel-framed building is faced with brick backed by terra cotta.

The first ten floors of the structure were allocated to central office use (although it would take several years for all the necessary equipment to be moved and installed). The upper floors were allocated to administrative use, with the twenty-ninth floor reserved for executive offices. Usable floor space in the building amounts to 850,000 square feet. The seventeenth story divides the building into two mechanically separate sections. It forms a basement for the tower section, holding all the equipment (which is typically housed in the basement of a building) needed to provide services to the tower. The seventeenth story also holds typical rooftop equipment for the base of the building. In an emergency, the tower equipment can serve the base.

The final rivet was placed in the structure by telephone company president J.S. McCulloh; Thurber by this time had assumed the position of chairman of the board. The last brick and stone were placed by tradesmen elected by their co-workers. On February 19, 1926, the first occupants entered the building, beginning what was referred to as "the longest moving day in New York's history."[42] Contemporary accounts indicate that the building was completed on June 30, 1926, but the Department of Buildings did not sign off on the work until April 8, 1927.

Description

The Barclay-Vesey Building is a thirty-two-story structure with an additional five stories below ground. There are mezzanines above the first, seventeenth, and thirty-first stories. A New York Telephone Company publication equated the building's height with that of Egypt's tallest pyramid.[43] The building occupies a parallelogram-shaped site approximately 210 by 250 feet wide, covering 52,000 square feet, with nineteen bays on the east and west facades of the base and twenty-three bays on the north and south facades. Above the granite base, the structure is faced in gray-, gold- and buff-colored brick in common bond which has been repointed in several areas on each facade. Detailing is executed in limestone at the lower stories and in cast stone above.

The building takes the form of a tower rising from the center of a massive base. (Fig. 6) The orientation of the tower reflects the orthogonal grid of Manhattan and appears to have been rotated atop the parallelogram-shaped base of the structure. The building rises straight from the ground to the tenth story, where the first setback occurs along the length of the north and south facades. A setback also occurs at the center of the east and west facades at this point, creating light courts for the eleventh through the seventeenth stories in front of the tower. At the seventeenth story another major setback occurs at all facades. From this point the tower, measuring 108 feet by 116 feet, rises to a total height of thirty-two stories. Minor setbacks occur at other points between the thirteenth and nineteenth stories, highlighted by detailing in stone and brick.

Much of the decorative ornament of the building consists of intertwining vines sprouting leaves, flowers, and grapes. Scattered throughout the interlaces are cherubs, human figures, and a variety of creatures including fish, snails, mice,

lizards, frogs, birds, squirrels, and snakes. While some specific decorative patterns may be repeated, numerous variations on the intertwining vine theme are found throughout the building's ornamental program. Rather than describe in detail all variations represented, particular architectural elements will be cited as using the intertwining vine pattern and it will be understood that the pattern may contain any combination of the figures mentioned above. Especially significant or unusual features will be addressed.

The east and west (main) facades are similar in design and contain identical double-height entrances which are recessed in the center of the facades, the width of each entry spanning three window bays. (Fig. 7) Two revolving multipane doors and a pair of doors are framed in bronze. The framing members are filled with strings of creatures or with a repeating chevron pattern, and pinnacles with cherubs are capped by bells. (Fig. 8) (Another pair of doors is found to the right of each bronze-framed entryway.)

Above each door arrangement at the east and west facades is an expansive window covered by an elaborate bronze grille of intertwining vines and grapes, arranged vertically, which is also visible at the interior through the colored window glass. (A metal replica of the Bell Telephone Company logo, a bell within a circle, has been attached to the window grille.) A limestone frieze above the window displays an intertwining vine pattern featuring human figures and a central bird. (Fig. 9) A light fixture with an inverted setback form hangs between two ceiling panels filled with ornament.

The two-story entrance surround is faced in limestone; chamfered surfaces are elaborately ornamented. In the stone lintel above the opening are found figures of an American Indian and a Mongolian which are meant to symbolize the lands of the west and the east, the directions the entrances face. Flanking the center panel, which displays a bell, are the patterned, projecting bases of the vertical piers which articulate the overall height of the facade; their patterning of roots and stems further reinforce the vertical emphasis.

Two single window bays flank the West Street entry. (Fig. 10) These are flanked at each side by a larger opening spanning three bays, then another single bay. The two end bays of this facade are each articulated by wide arches, the southern one opening onto the Vesey Street arcade. The storefronts of the building are based on a tripartite design: a solid panel at the base, a glazed area at the middle, usually divided into three vertical sections, and a transom with additional vertical subdivisions topped by a decorative cornice consisting of dolphins, seahorses, and birds. (Fig. 11) Winged figures act as pinnacles at the top of the window frame. A sketch, drawn by Walker and published in a history of the Rotch Traveling Scholarship, illustrates a centralized sculpture with similar winged elements.[44] (Fig. 12) Some storefronts are recessed, some are punctuated by doors (some with transoms and steps). Most glass within the ground-story bays is now painted.

Most of the spandrels between the first- and second-story windows are faced with ornamented stone. The stone sills and surrounds of the second-story windows also have elaborate ornamentation featuring a stylized plant form. Stone sills of third story windows also have carved ornament, and, excluding the end bays, have a geometric border below. Windows above the first story have steel, double-hung, three-over-three sash. A minimal number of windows have been replaced by aluminum windows at each facade. Also, several louvered vents fill window openings, either fully or partially, at each facade. Window sills above the third story have smaller proportions than those below and have no elaboration.

The base of the building receives its vertical emphasis from piers which rise from the first and second stories to a point above the setbacks where they are capped with cast stone; the central piers display carved snails. Windows at this level are emphasized with elaborate stone ornament at the head and sill.

The Vesey Street facade (Fig. 13) at the south side of the building incorporates a ground-story arcade whose vaulting system utilizes Guastavino arches. (Fig. 14) The twelve-bay arcade is sixteen feet wide, eighteen feet high, and 252 feet in length. The tile arches rest on brick piers with granite bases. The openings are faced in stone carved with an intertwining vine pattern, cherubs, roosters, and squirrels, and a chevron pattern borders the soffit. (Fig. 15) The arcade incorporates storefronts, similar to those of the West Street facade but with recessed transoms, in each bay opening. The storefront openings are faced with limestone.

Along Vesey Street, the stone spandrels between the first-story arches and the second-story

windows are trimmed with a geometric pattern. Pairs of second-story windows have continuous stone sills with lions carved below the windows and surrounds which are similar to those of the West Street facade. Above the second story, the treatment of the facade follows that of the east and west facades. The Barclay Street facade on the north is similar to the Vesey Street facade. Ground-story openings of the north facade are similar to those inside the Vesey Street arcade, however, a central entrance spanning four bays provides for freight service.

At all facades, the amount of cast stone ornament increases above the twenty-eighth story. (Fig. 16) Intricately carved panels fill the spandrels and cap the piers which, above the twenty-ninth story, form buttress-like elements. Corner piers at the twenty-ninth story display elephant heads with ears transformed into geometric shapes and trunks extending down the corner of the tower in a geometric pattern. The arched, multipane, double-height windows encompassing the thirtieth, thirty-first, and thirty-first-mezzanine stories are topped by elaborate cast stone ornament composed of geometric forms terminating in a pineapple or a rabbit. Window surrounds of the top story are simple, as are the piers extending above the roofline. Metal fencing now encloses rooftop equipment, with additional equipment located in front of some thirty-second-story windows.

Subsequent History

Apart from a few minor changes, the Barclay-Vesey Building remains substantially intact. One of the significant qualities of the building is its dual function as office space and a communications center. As technology in the field of communications has progressed, equipment has been added to the roof and regularly upgraded, while respecting the building's original design. This has enabled the structure to retain its significance as an office and operations center for the New York Telephone Company. It is anticipated that rooftop equipment will continue to be ugraded on a regular basis.

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NOTES

1. New York Telephone Company, "The Site," *Telephone Review* (Sept., 1926), 326.

2. Ralph T. Walker, "A New Architecture," *Telephone Review* (Sept., 1926), 323.

3. Ann C. Buttenwieser, *Manhattan Water-bound* (New York, 1987), 39-40.

4. The market survived until it and the surrounding buildings were demolished in the late 1960s. The site is now occupied by the U.S. Customs Building.

5. Born in Brooklyn, Thurber began his life-long career in the telephone business in 1890 as an assistant engineer for the Metropolitan Telephone and Telegraph Company in New York. He rose to the position of general superintendent in that company from 1894 to 1906, then transferred to the New York Telephone Company as general manager. "Howard F. Thurber," *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 1 (Chicago, 1968), 1238. See also: Howard F. Thurber obituary, *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 1928, p.31; New York Telephone Company, "The New Telephone Building at 140 West Street," *Telephone Review* (Sept., 1926), 321.

6. New York Telephone Company, "The World Behind Your Telephone," (New York, 1936), 29-30.

7. Voorhees, Walker, Smith, Smith & Haines, *Telephone Buildings Since 1885* (New York, 1961), 3: Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz was the son of the prominent nineteenth-century New York architect Leopold Eidlitz, and established his business in New York in 1876. In Paul Gmelin's obituary, it was reported that the 1885 telephone building was designed by McKenzie and Gmelin for a competition. *Herald Tribune*, Nov. 21, 1937, p.80.

8. The New York Times Building still stands, although its exterior cladding was destroyed in a remodeling of 1965.

9. Voorhees, Walker, Smith, Smith & Haines. *Telephone Buildings Since 1885*, 39-45.

10. When awarded the Medal of Honor of the Architectural League of New York, McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin attributed the work to Walker. Walker cited David C. Comstock, Oliver Razor, Joseph Ballantyne, Chauncey Pierpoint, and John Baker as designers in the firm who assisted in the project.

11. Quoted in: Carol Willis, "Zoning and Zeitgeist: The Skyscraper City in the 1920s," *JSAH* 45 (Mar., 1986), 47.

12. Creators of the law divided the city into five height districts, called 1, 1-1/4, 1- 1/2, 2, and 2-1/2 districts. These numbers refer to multiples of the width of the street onto which a building faced. The building could rise straight to this height (150 feet for a building in a 1 1/2 district facing onto a street 100 feet in width) before a setback was required. A line drawn from the middle of the street through a point at the top of the first setback formed the spatial envelope for the remainder of the building.

13. Harvey Wiley Corbett, "Zoning and the Envelope of the Building," *Pencil Points* 4 (Apr., 1923), 15, 18.

14. Corbett, "Architecture," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* vol. 2 (Chicago, 1929), 275.

15. William A. Starrett, *Skyscrapers and the Men Who Build Them* (New York, 1928), 101.

16. From "The Coming City of Setback Skyscrapers," *New York Times*, Apr. 29, 1923, sec.4, p.5, as quoted in Willis, 55.

17. In his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry entitled "Architecture," Harvey Wiley Corbett included a set of four images of the Barclay-Vesey Building in various stages of the design process. His arrangement of these images recalls Corbett's earlier presentation of drawings illustrating the stages of design of an imaginary building under the Zoning Law, published in 1923. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 287, plate 2.) See Fig. 5.

18. NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 84, Lot 1. NB 312-1923.

19. This theory did not completely rule out hand craftsmanship. Walker believed that a combination of machine production and handwork could truthfully express modern architecture. Walker, "The Barclay-Vesey Telephone Building," *The American Architect* 130 (Nov. 5, 1926), 397.

20. Corbett, "New Heights in American Architecture," *Yale Review* (1928), 696.

21. Walker, "The Barclay-Vesey Telephone Building," *American Architect* 130 (Nov. 5, 1926), 397.

22. "The Barclay-Vesey Building for the New York Telephone Company," *Architecture and Building* 58, no.10 (Oct., 1926), 109.

23. Walker, "A New Architecture," 323.

24. Unfortunately, the arcade never gained the popularity its designers had hoped, probably due to the fact that the covered area was so dark. "The Barclay-Vesey Building for the New York Telephone Company," 111.

25. Walker, "The Barclay-Vesey Telephone Building," 391.

26. Ibid., 398.

27. Lewis Mumford, "The Barclay-Vesey Building," *New Republic* 51 (July 6, 1927), 176-77.

28. Walker, "A New Architecture," 323.

29. Corbett, "Editorial Comment," *The American Architect* 130 (Nov. 20, 1926), 401.

30. It is interesting to note that Wright called Walker "the only other architect in America." *New York Times*, Jan. 18, 1973.

31. Mumford, 176-77. For more information on the building's interior see LPC, *The Barclay-Vesey Building, First Floor Interior Designation Report*, (New York, 1991). Walker continued this theme of continuity between interior and exterior design in the New Jersey Bell Headquarters using sandstone, and in the Western Union Building using brick. For more information see LPC, *Western Union Building*.

32. Other terms referring to this or related styles include Art Moderne, Jazz Modern, Zig Zag Modern, the Twenties or the Thirties Style, and Streamlined Modern. Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter, *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York* (New York, 1975), 41.

33. Walker, *Ralph Walker -- Architect*, 28.

34. "The World Behind Your Telephone," 10-11; "The New Telephone Building at 140 West Street," 321.

35. Corbett, "Editorial Comment," 401.

36. "The New Telephone Building at 140 West Street," 322.

37. Quoted in Robert A.M. Stern, et al., *New York 1930* (New York, 1987), 565.

38. "The Barclay-Vesey Building," *Architectural Record* 61 (Apr., 1927), 301.

39. While Lewis Mumford generally praised the building, he believed there was one major flaw in the design, saying "the Barclay-Vesey Building is about as good as an architect can do today -- business permitting." His main problem with the design arose from the shape of the site and the transition between the base and the tower. The transition was too abrupt for his taste and the skewed juncture between the parts was to him an "annoying defect." Mumford, 176-77.

40. Corbett, "Editorial Comment," 401.

41. For more information on the construction of the building see: New York Telephone Company, "The Excavation," and "Foundations," *Telephone Review* (Sept., 1926), 329, 414. The General Contractor for the project was Marc Eidlitz & Son, Inc. Consulting engineers included Moran, Maurice & Proctor; Meyer, Strong & Jones; Todd, Robertson & Todd; and H.G. Balcom. New York Telephone Company, "The New Telephone Building at 140 West Street," 322.

42. "Telephone Moving Day," *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 1926, p.13.

43. "Our Neighbor's New Home," *Long Lines* 6 (Aug., 1926), 26.

44. A building in the same sketch has a setback form detailed with an all-over pattern of geometric ornament. *The Rotch Traveling Scholarship: A Review of its History, 1883-1963.* (Boston, 1963).

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. The Barclay-Vesey Building, 140 West Street, Block 84, Lot 1, Landmark Site. (Graphic Source: Sanborn, *Manhattan Land Book*, 1988-89.)

2. Ferriss and Corbett renderings of stages in the design of a building based on zoning law setback restrictions. (*Skyscraper Style*, 9.)

3. The Barclay-Vesey Building, rendering by Chester B. Price. (New York Historical Society, Postcard Collection.)

4. Entries for the Chicago Tribune Competition. a) Eliel Saarinen, Second Place. (Pictured in *Skyscraper Style*, 7.) b) Ralph Walker, Honorable Mention. (Pictured in *Chicago Tribune Competition*, plate 96.)

5. "Trial Models and Completed Structure of the New York Telephone Company Building." (Illustrated in "Architecture," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 287, plate 2.)

6. The Barclay-Vesey Building, view from southwest corner, c.1960? (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Research Files.)

7. Washington Street entrance. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster, LPC, 1991.)

8. Entrance detail showing top of door frame and lower part of bronze window grille. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster, LPC, 1991.)

9. Entrance detail. Note light fixture and limestone detailing. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster, LPC, 1991.)

10. Historic view of the Barclay-Vesey Building from the south showing the Washington Market in foreground. (New York Historical Society, Postcard Collection.)

11. Detail of storefront enframement and second-story windows. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster, LPC, 1991.)

12. Sketch by Ralph Walker showing a central winged sculpture and a setback structure. (*The Rotch Traveling Scholarship: A History, 1883-1963.*)

13. Historic view of the Barclay-Vesey Building showing Washington Street facade and Vesey Street arcade. (New York Historical Society, Postcard Collection.)

14. View of Vesey Street arcade taken from Washington Street looking west. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster, LPC, 1991.)

15. Detail of limestone ornament at arcade. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster, LPC, 1991.)

16. View of upper stories of Barclay-Vesey Building. (*Year Book of The Architectural League of New York.*)

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 Barclay-Vesey Building has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as a part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Barclay-Vesey Building, built in 1923-27, was the first major work of Ralph Walker, a prominent New York City architect; that, commissioned by the New York Telephone Company, the building was intended to stand as a corporate symbol and was promoted as the world's largest telephone building; that, a pivotal structure in the history of skyscraper architecture, it is a prototypical example of the American Art Deco style, and at the time of its construction was called Modernistic in style; that its set-back form, a response to the 1916 New York City Building Zone Resolution, is an achievement of the incorporation of the law's restrictions into a completed architectural design; that Walker's intention that the building be completely modern in every aspect of its design was a response to contemporary architectural trends and his objective was carried out in the building's form, construction techniques, materials, unconventional ornament, and style; that Walker approached the design of the building as a whole -- a sculptural mass -- and executed a critically acclaimed ornamental program which recalls the history of the site and the surrounding area; that the overall effect of Walker's successful design includes a blending of complicated ornament with simple forms, naturalistic elements with geometric shapes, and large massing with small details; that the building's dual function as office space and communications center has enabled the building to retain its significance to the telephone industry; and that the substantially intact building was, upon completion, heralded as a monument to American architecture, and today continues to be a dramatic presence on Manhattan's skyline.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534, Chapter 21), 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 Barclay-Vesey Building, 140 West Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 84, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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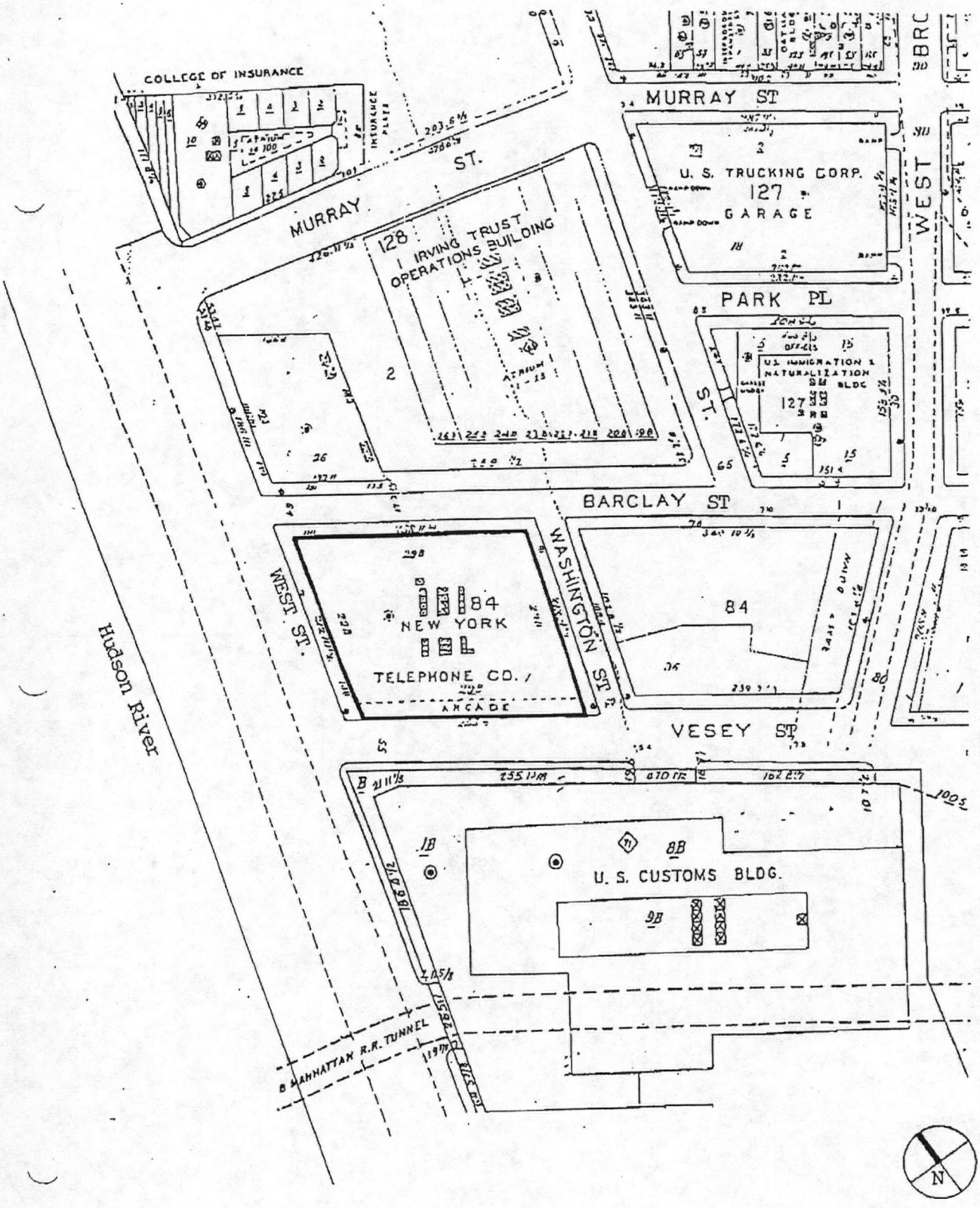


Fig. 1: The Barclay-Vesey Building, 140 West Street, Block 84, Lot 1, Landmark Site. (Graphic Source: Sanborn, Manhattan Land Book, 1988-89.)

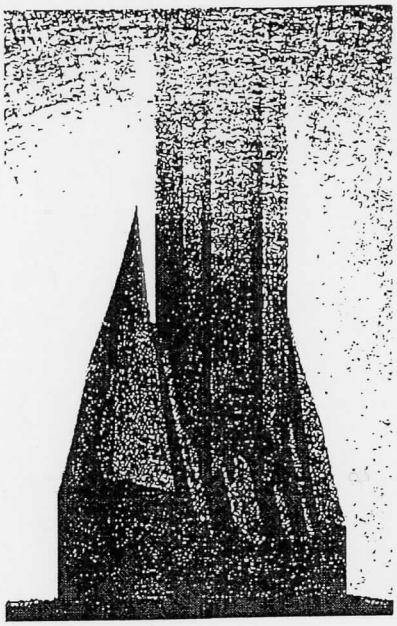


Figure 1

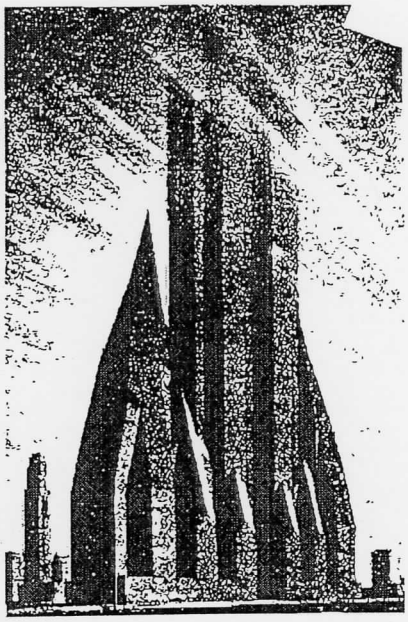


Figure 2

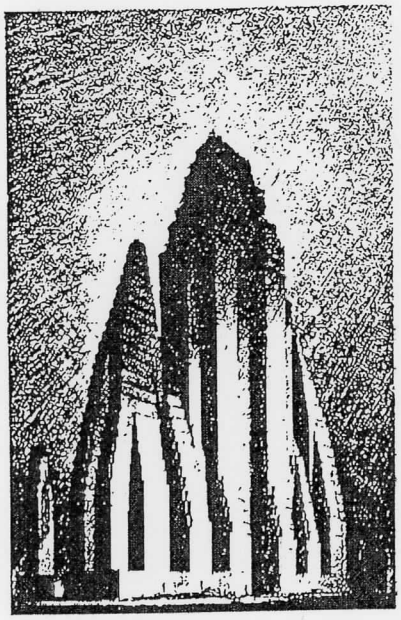


Figure 3

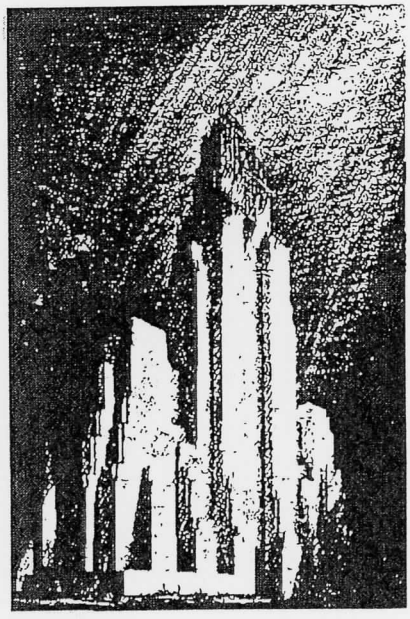
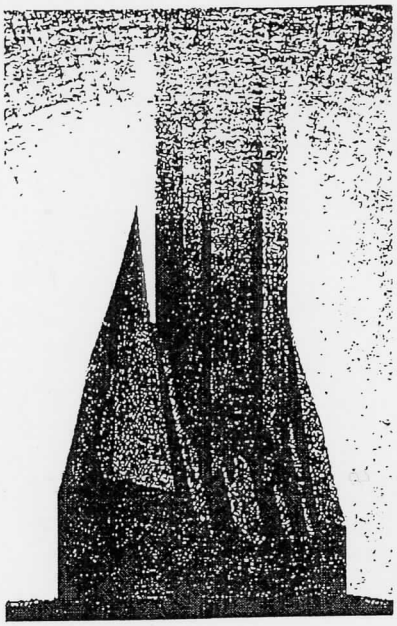


Figure 4

Fig. 2: Ferriss and Corbett renderings of stages in the design of a building based on zoning law setback restrictions. (Skyscraper Style, 9.)



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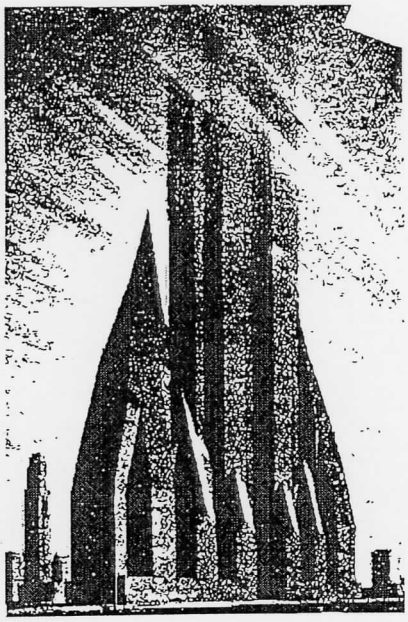
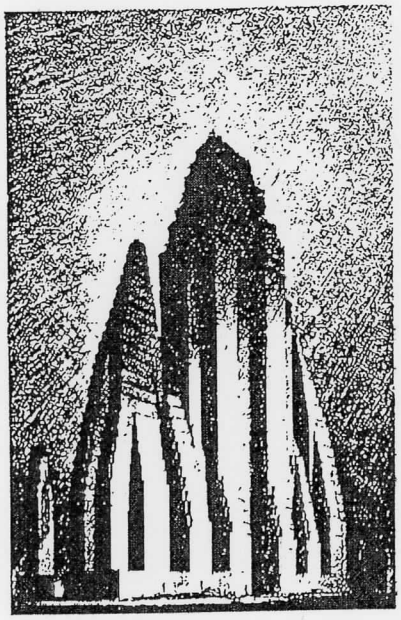


Figure 2



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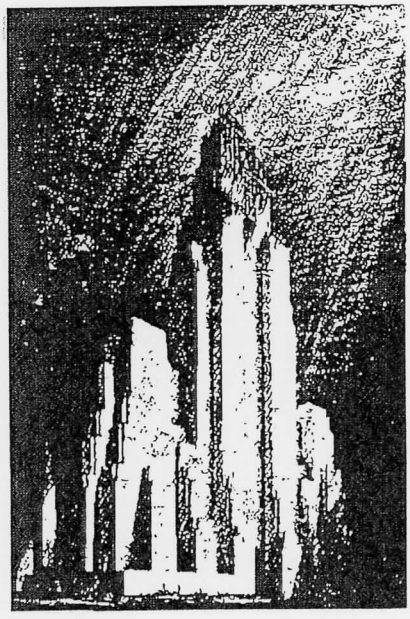

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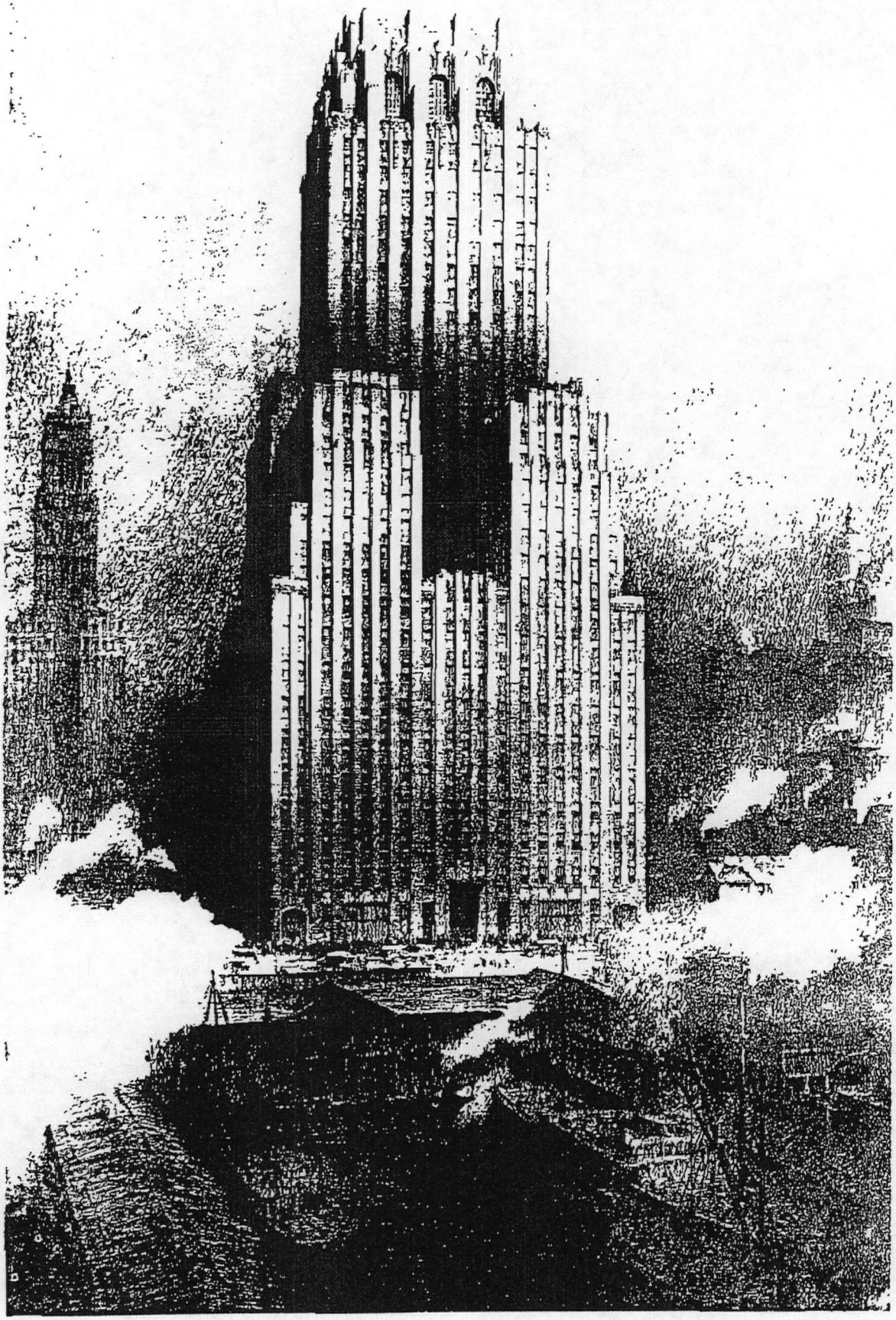
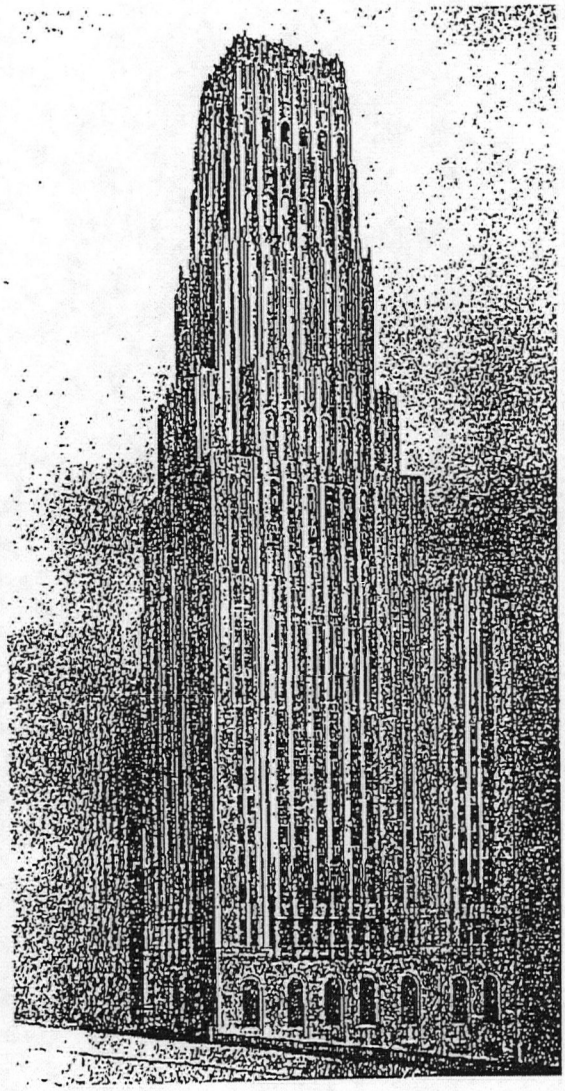


Fig. 3: The Barclay-Vesey Building, rendering by Chester B. Price. (New York Historical Society, Postcard Collection.)



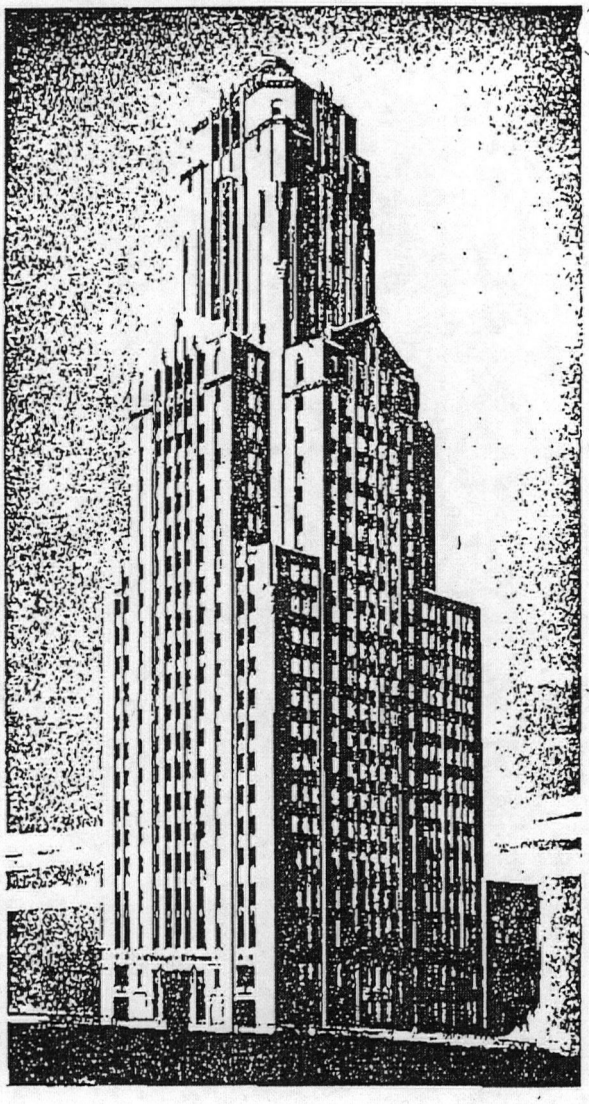
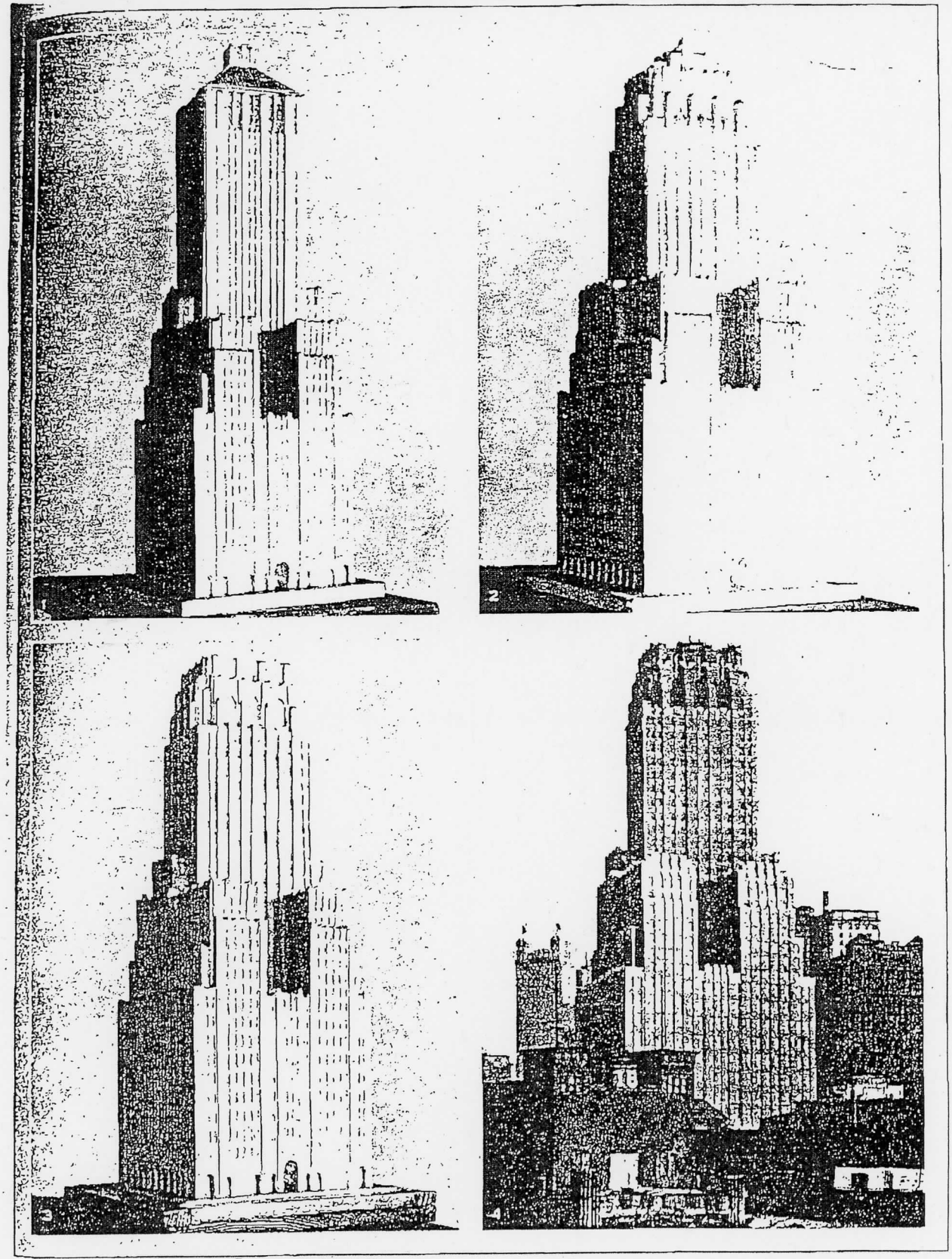


Fig. 4: Entries for the Chicago Tribune Competition. a) Eliel Saarinen, Second Place. (Pictured in Skyscraper Style, 7.) b) Ralph Walker, Honorable Mention. (Pictured in Chicago Tribune Competition, plate 96.)



MODELS AND PHOTOGRAPH BY COURTESY OF VOORHEES, GMELIN & WALKER

TRIAL MODELS AND COMPLETED STRUCTURE OF THE N. Y. TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING

1. First trial model, which, taking advantage of all the bulk possible under the restrictions of the zoning law, carried the tower higher than was finally deemed necessary
2. Second trial model, showing tower reduced in height, thus forming a pleasanter relation to the general mass of the supporting building
3. Final model. The top of the tower has been simplified
4. The completed building, at Barclay and Vesey streets, from the Hudson river side. Such an exceptional view, showing the apportionment of the tower to the building mass, cannot be obtained of most New York towers, because of lack of sufficient space in front

Fig. 5: "Trial Models and Completed Structure of the New York Telephone Company Building." (Illustrated in "Architecture," Encyclopaedia Britannica. 287, plate 2.)

Fig. 6: The Barclay-Vesey Building, view from southwest corner, c.1960? (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Research Files.)

Fig. 7: Washington Street entrance. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster.)

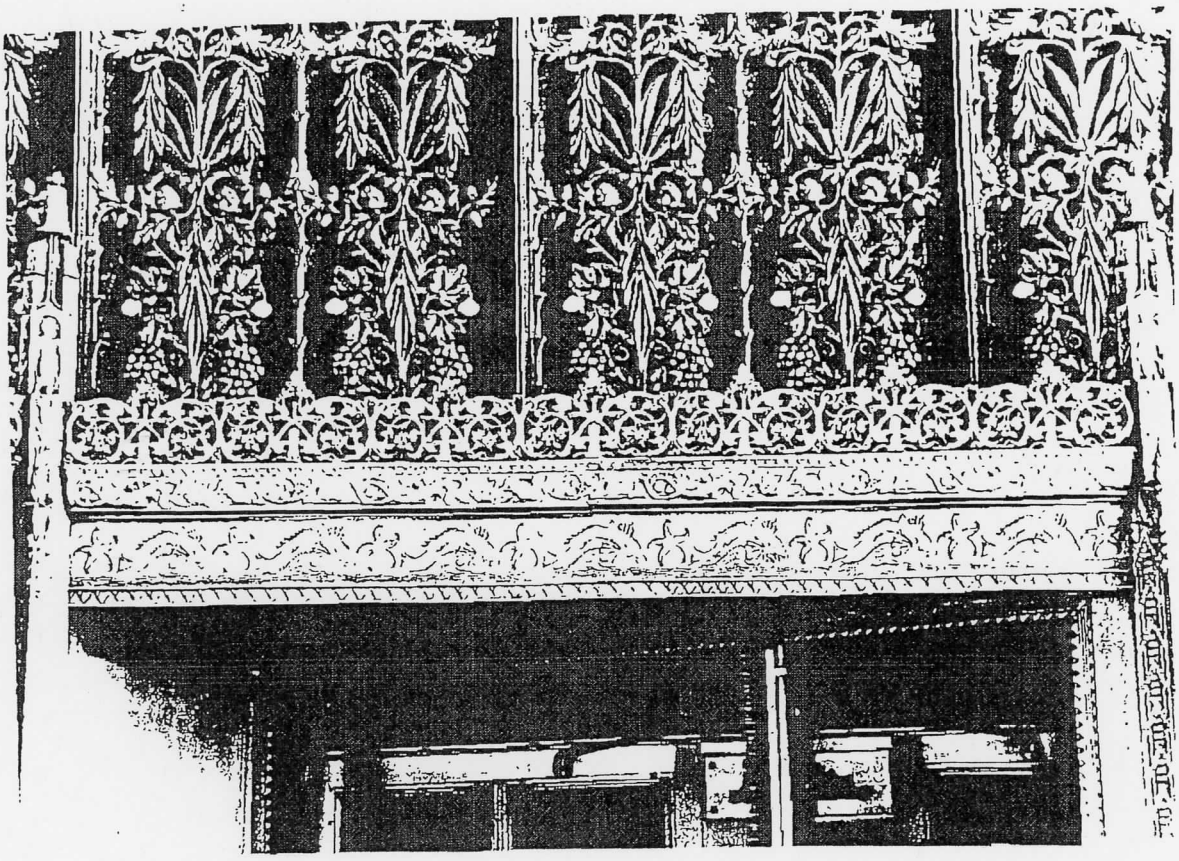


Fig. 8: Entrance detail showing top of door frame and lower part of bronze window grille. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster.)

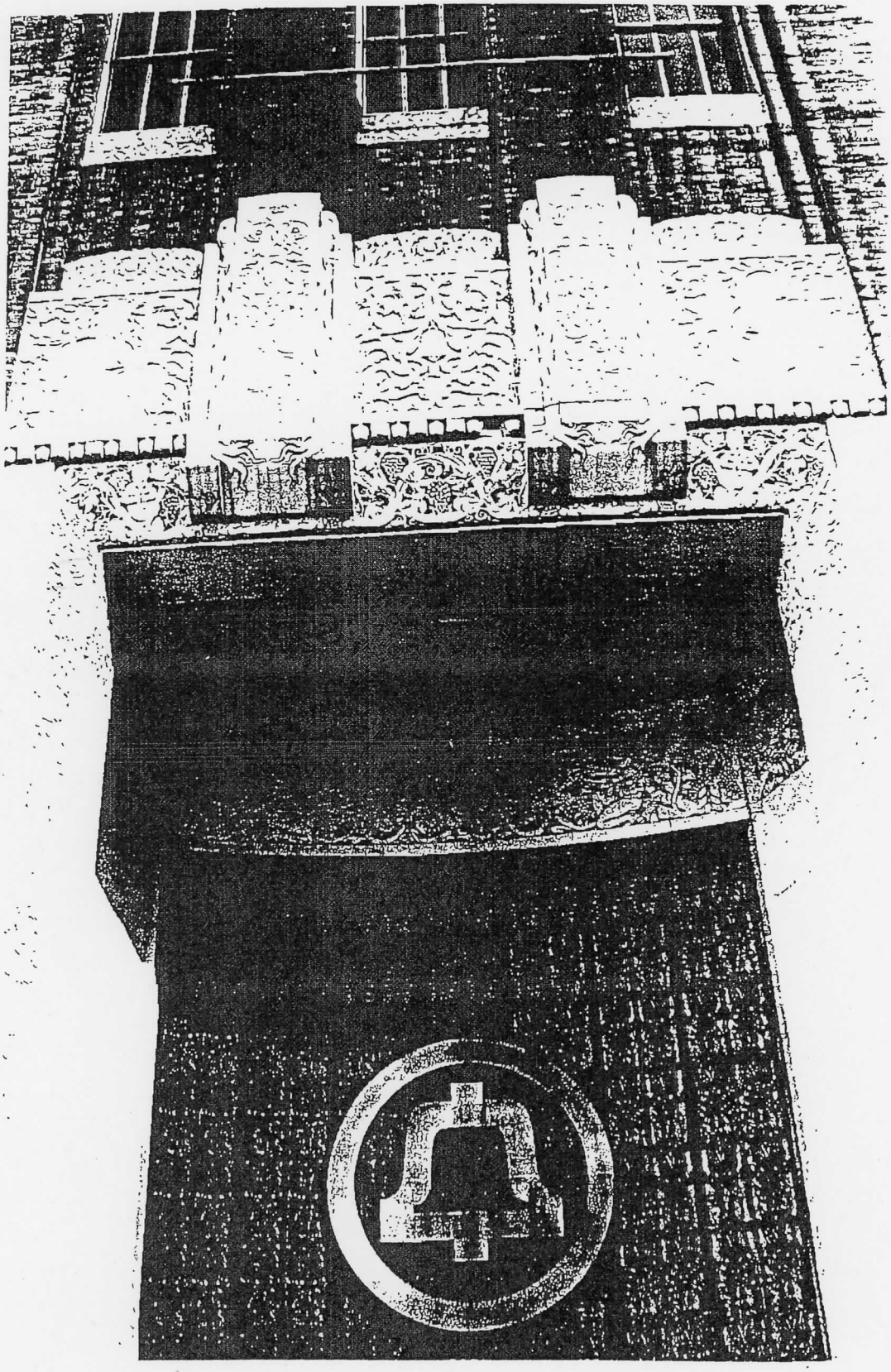


Fig. 9: Entrance detail. Note light fixture and limestone detailing. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster.)

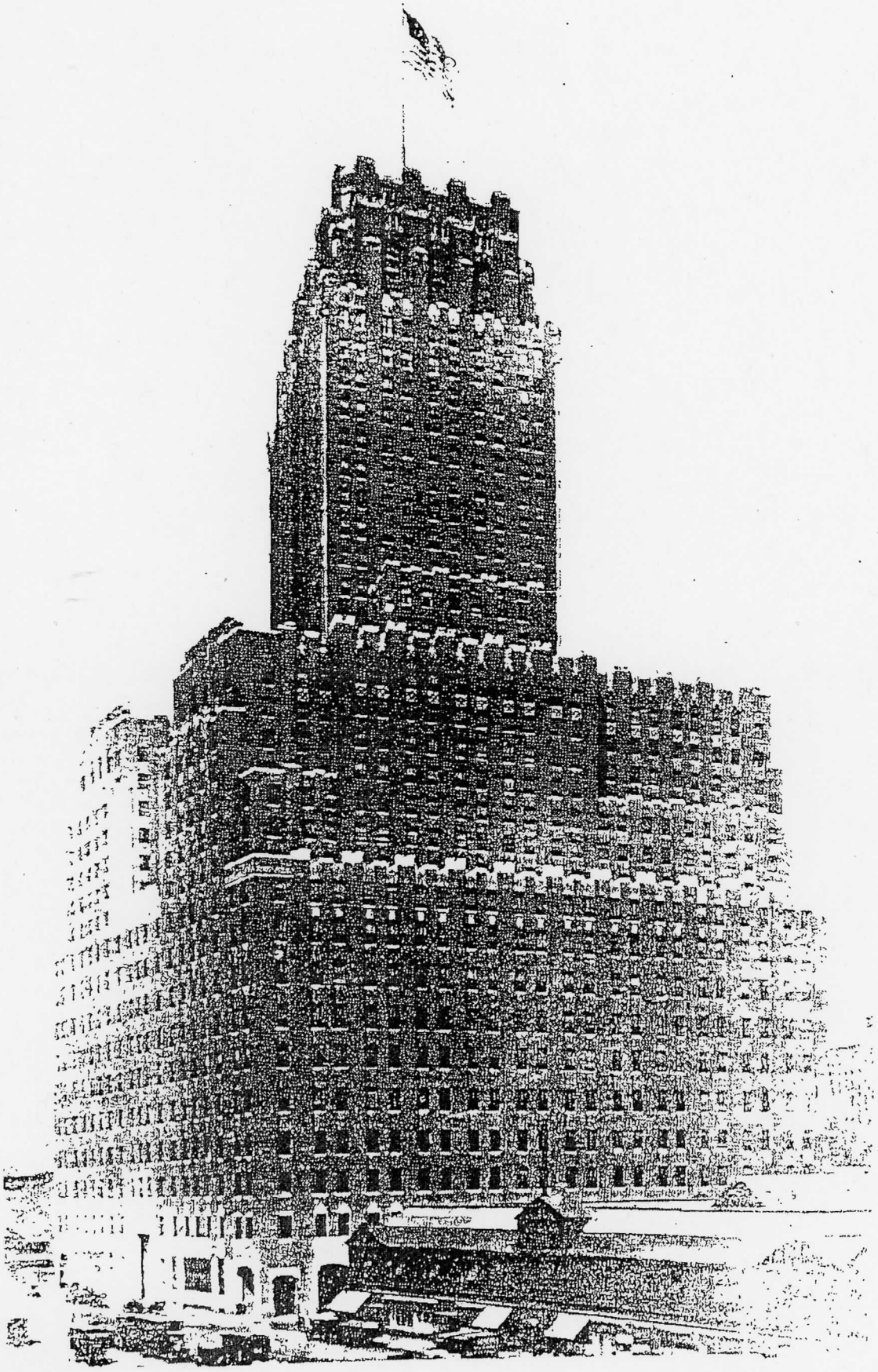


Fig. 10: Historic view of the Barclay-Vesey Building from the south showing the Washington Market in foreground. (New York Historical Society, Postcard Collection.)

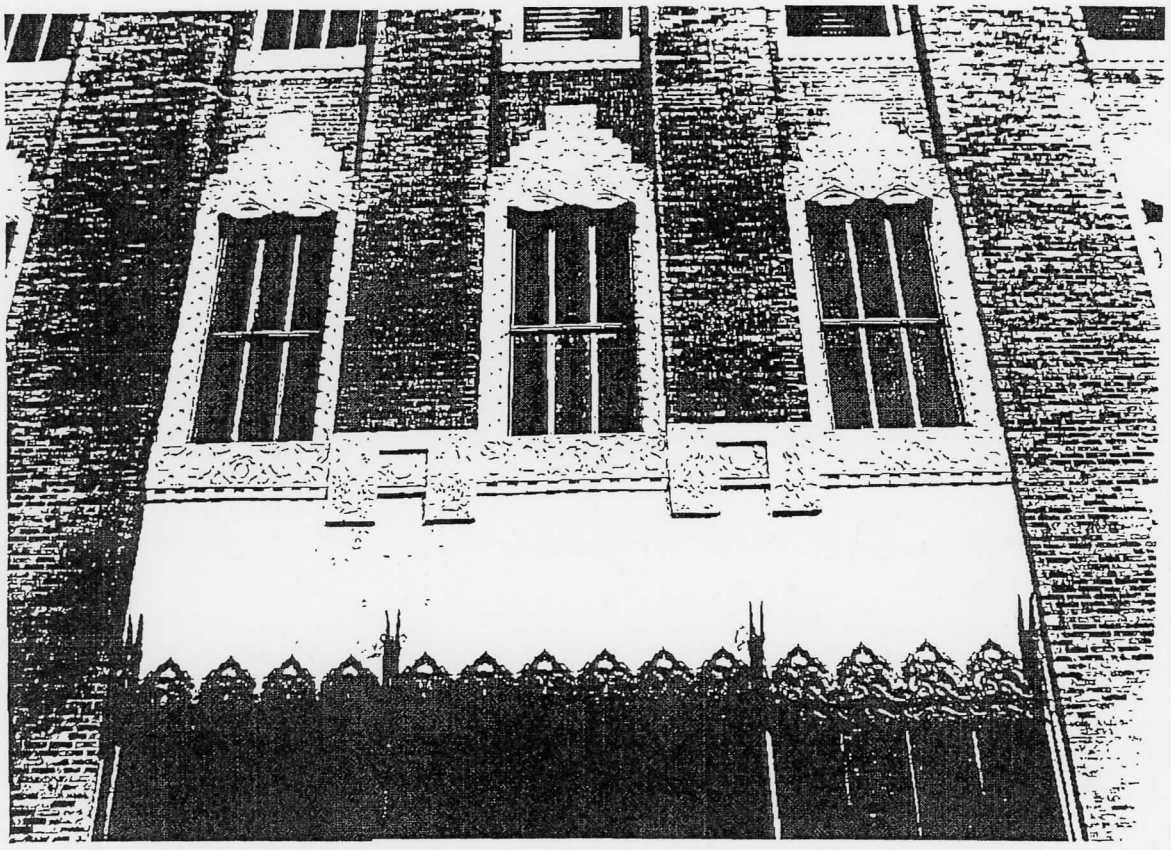


Fig. 11: Detail of storefront enframement and second-story windows. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster.)

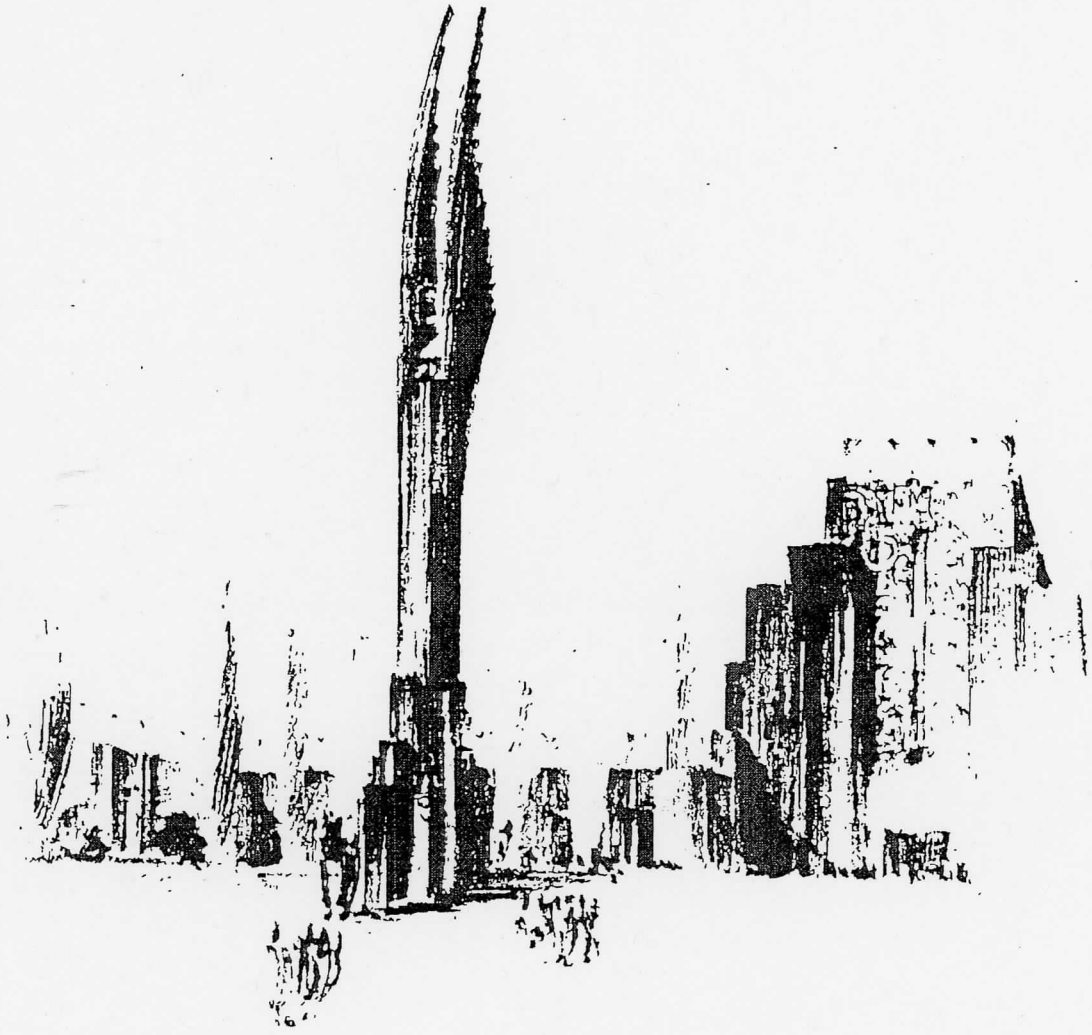


Fig. 12: Sketch by Ralph Walker showing a central winged sculpture and a setback structure. (The Rotch Traveling Scholarship: A History, 1883-1963.)

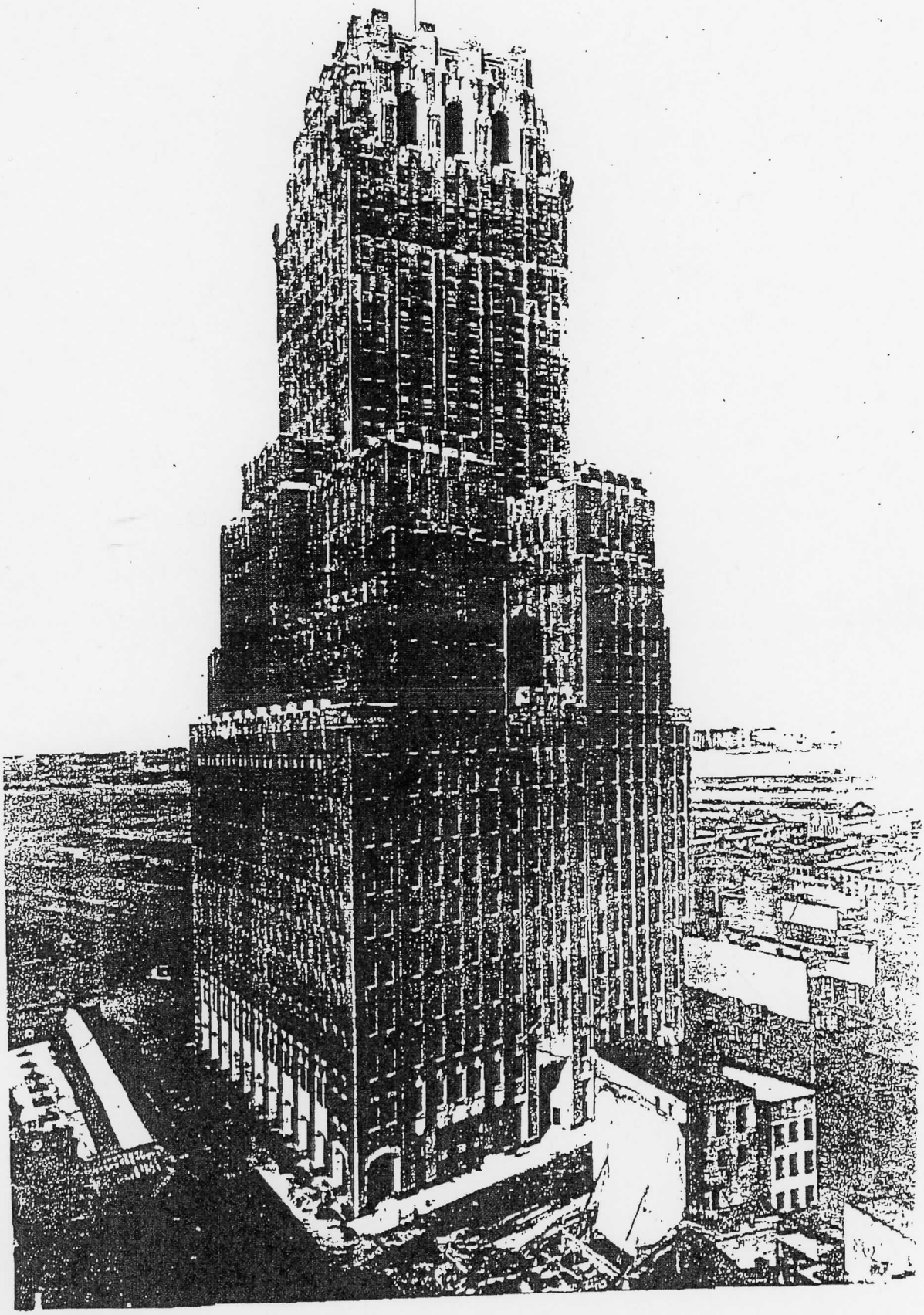


Fig. 13: Historic view of the Barclay-Vesey Building showing Washington Street facade and Vesey Street arcade. (New York Historical Society, Postcard Collection.)

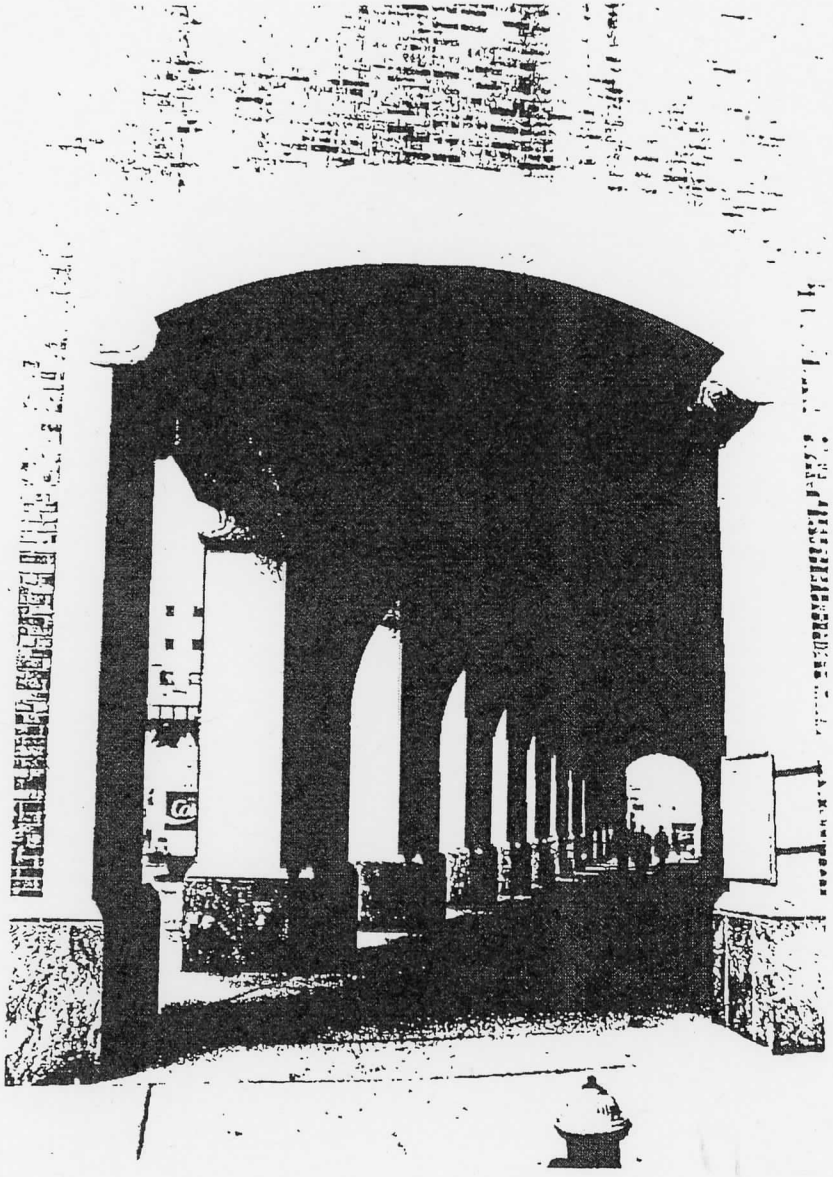


Fig. 14: View of Vesey Street arcade taken from Washington Street, looking west.

Fig. 15: Detail of limestone ornament at arcade. (Photo Credits: Carl Forster.)

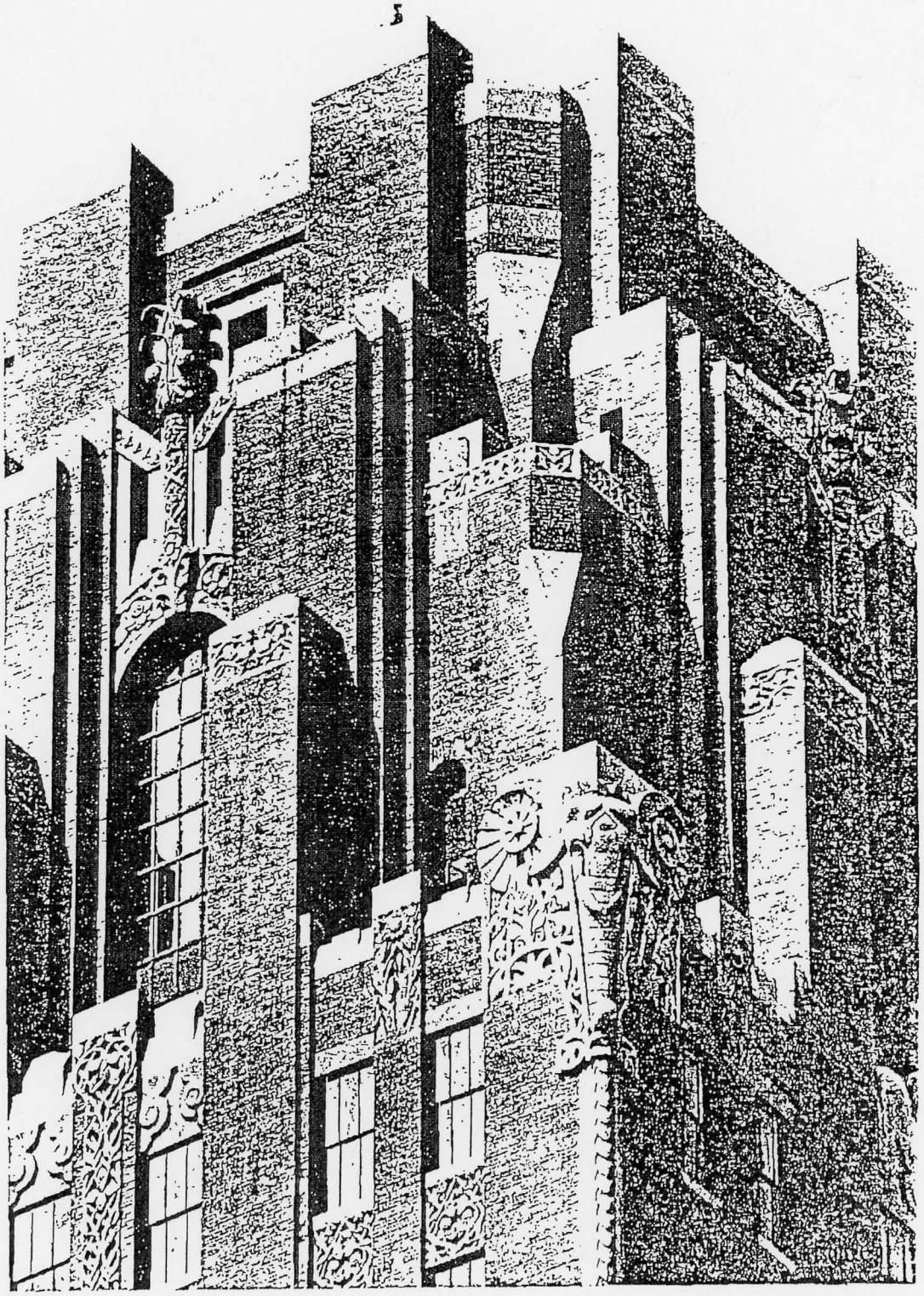


Fig. 16: View of upper stories of Barclay-Vesey Building. (Year Book of The Architectural League of New York.)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: New York Telephone Company Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, New York

DATE RECEIVED: 3/20/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/03/09
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/18/09 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/03/09
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000257

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 4.30.09 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

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.


CONNECTION

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Looking east toward the west elevation

1 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building

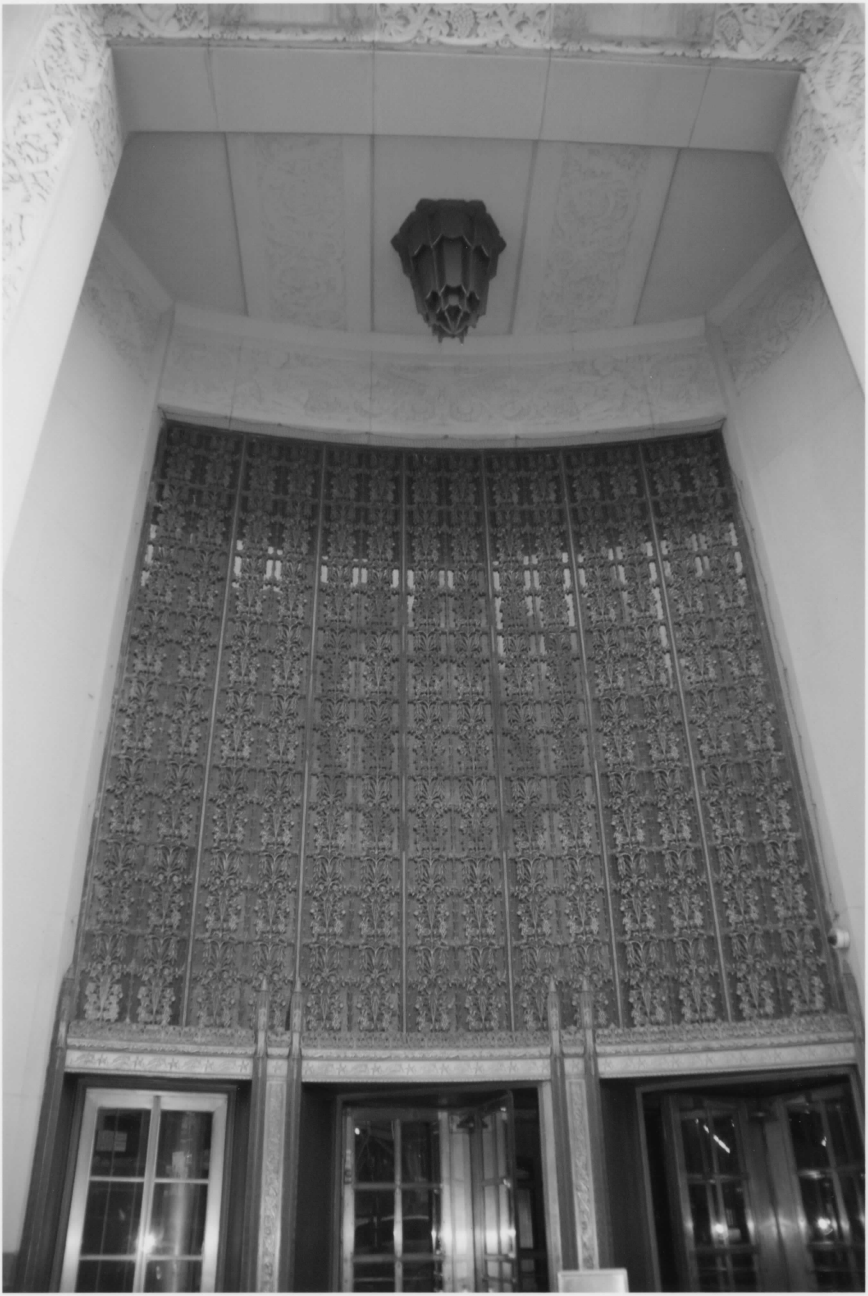
New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Looking east toward the upper stories of the west elevation

2 of 18



New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

Macrostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Looking east toward the west elevation entrance

3 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Detail, ornamentation on the west elevation entrance

4 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Looking southeast toward the north and west elevations

5 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

Macfostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Detail of a storefront window on the north elevation

6 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Detail of second story windows on the north elevation

7 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Looking west toward the east and north elevations

8 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay - Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

Macrostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Detail of setbacks on east and north elevations

9 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Detail of the roofline and ornamentation on the east and north elevations

10 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Detail of lintel and spandrel panel on the east elevation

11 of 18


Your Coffee Break Will
Never be the Same
Your Coffee Br
Never be the S

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Looking west toward the east elevation entrance

12 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)
New York County, NY
MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC
November 2008
Detail of light fixture at the east elevation entrance
13 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)
New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC
November 2008
Looking west toward the Vesey Street pedestrian arcade
14 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Detail of pedestrian arcade

15 of 18


COIN
TELEPHONES

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)
New York County, NY
Macrostie Historic Advisors, LLC
November 2008

Lobby, looking east toward Washington Street
16 of 18


6
7
8
LETTER BOX
U.S. MAIL

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Lobby, elevator bank

17 of 18

New York Telephone Company Building (Barclay-Vesey Building)

New York County, NY

MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

November 2008

Lobby, looking west toward West Street

18 of 18

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

JERSEY CITY QUADRANGLE
NEW JERSEY—NEW YORK
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

New York Telephone Company Building
(Barclay-Vesey Building)
New York County, NY
18 583375E 4507422N
USGS - Jersey City Quad 1:24000

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-5468, T-5469, and T-5470

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1954 and planetable surveys 1955. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. 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

UTM GRID AND 1981 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24000

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

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

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

JERSEY CITY, N. J.—N. Y.
N4037.5—W7400/7.5

1967
PHOTOREVISED 1981
DMA 6165 II NE—SERIES V822

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1982

9 780607 367744
T-D-74-3E-27-1
NBSI

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North, New York NY 10007 TEL: 212-669-7926 FAX: 212-669-7797
http://nyc.gov/landmarks/

KATE DALY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
kdaly@lpc.nyc.gov

January 14, 2009

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: New York Telephone Company Building (aka Barclay-Vesey Building), 140 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 New York Telephone Company Building at 140 West Street in Manhattan for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Commission strongly supports the nomination of the New York Telephone Company Building. On October 1, 1991 the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate this building as both a New York City individual and interior landmark based on its significance as the first major design of New York architect Ralph Walker. This building is one of the most significant structures in the annals of skyscraper design, since it was the first to exploit the requirements of the 1916 zoning code. The elegant interior has veined marble walls, travertine floors with bronze medallions and a vaulted ceiling embellished with murals depicting the stages in the evolution of human communication.

Therefore, based on the Commission's prior review and designation of this building and its interior, the Commission has determined that New York Telephone Company Building at 140 West Street appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Sincerely yours,

Kate Daly

cc: Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Mary Beth Betts

OFFICE OF PARKS · RECREATION · HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

David A. Paterson
Governor

Carol Ash
Commissioner

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189
518-237-8643
www.nysparks.com

March 18, 2009

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 Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to transmit three new National Register nominations to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register as follows:

New York Telephone Company Building, New York, New York Co., NY

Park and Tilford Building, New York, New York Co., NY

Congregation Beth Abraham, Brooklyn, Kings Co., NY

Thank you for your assistance in processing these proposals. Please feel free to call on me at 518-237-8643 ext. 3258 if any questions arise.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Peckham
National Register
Program Coordinator

enclosures