Landmarks Preservation Commission
March 12, 1985; Designation List 176
LP-1274

B. ALTMAN & COMPANY DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING, 355-371 Fifth Avenue, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1905-1913; architects Trowbridge & Livingston.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 864, Lot 1.

On February 9, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the B. Altman & Company Department Store Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing was continued to April 13, 1982 (Item No. 2). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. Three representatives of B. Altman stated that while their preference was for no designation, they were not opposed to designation. A statement in favor of designation was received from Manhattan Community Board No. 5.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The dignified B. Altman & Company Building, located at the northeast corner of 34th Street and Fifth Avenue, is a distinguished design by Trowbridge & Livingston and one of the flagship department stores of Fifth Avenue. When the new B. Altman store opened in 1906, Fifth Avenue was essentially a small-scale street filled with shops catering to the upper crust of New York society. The opening of B. Altman catalyzed Fifth Avenue's transformation into a grand boulevard lined with many large department stores serving a broad clientele. An Italian Renaissance palazzo type design, B. Altman is elegant but reserved, stately rather than flamboyant; it is a reminder that the building was designed to blend into a neighborhood it then helped to transform.

Fifth Avenue and the Department Store

The history of B. Altman & Company, and its move to Fifth Avenue, is part of the larger history of the development of the department store as an American institution, and of the movement of commercial districts within Manhattan. The deparment store as a special type of store and building had its origins in the A.T. Stewart store on Broadway near City Hall built in 1846. Stewart's store, a general drygoods emporium, was a new concept, replacing the earlier specialty shops which had sold only one item, such as silks or silver. Stewart's building, though originally occupying only the corner of Broadway and Reade Street, was gradually expanded until it stretched the entire block on Broadway between Reade and Chambers Streets, and back several hundred feet east towards Centre Street. Stewart's architects, Trench & Snook, adapted elements of Italian palazzo design, added enormous display windows set between cast-iron columns, and created the first "commercial palace" in America.[1]

The rapid growth of the city during the 1840s and 1850s, and continuing after the Civil War, brough much new wealth to New Yorkers. A new elite, unsure of its social standing, struggled to consolidate its hegemony by making conspicuous displays of wealth. The mass production of the sewing machine by companies such as Singer enabled seamstresses to design and sew many elegant outfits which had previously been impossible.[2] Hence New York society's demand for fine dry goods, and shopping as the daily pastime for ladies of social consequence.

The palazzo department store buildings increased in number and soon created whole districts. As the commercial center of Manhattan gradually moved uptown, so did the department store clusters.[3] In the 1860s, the main grouping was to be found on Broadway between Canal and 14th Streets. By the 1880s, a new district had formed between 14th and 23rd Streets, along Broadway ("Ladies Mile") and along Sixth Avenue ("Fashion Row"). Almost all these department store buildings looked to the palazzo type for design, and incorporated enormous central light courts, large display-windows, and such up-to-the-minute innovations as elevators and escalators. One of the major deparment stores on "Fashion Row" was B. Altman & Company, at the corner of 18th Street.

B. Altman & Company

Benjamin Altman was born in New York City in 1840. He joined his father in a storefront drygoods business on Third Avenue near 10th Street at the end of the Civil War.[4] By 1874, the son had moved B. Altman to Sixth Avenue at 18th Street, where the store would remain for thirty years.[5]

B. Altman became a world leader in fine dry goods such as silks, satins, and velvets. In 1904, the Evening Sun called B. Altman "one of the greatest department stores in the world...a Bon Marché of the New World."[6] By the turn of the century the Sixth Avenue store had grown into a block-long building with a light, refined cast-iron facade designed by D. & J. Jardine; it had been dubbed "The Palace of Trade."[7] Benjamin Altman was a savvy, but unusually humane, businessman. During his career he was the first major employer to install restrooms and a subsidized cafeteria for his employees;[8] the first to inaugurate a shorter business day and Saturday closings in the summer; and the first actively to encourage schooling for younger employees by providing funding for their education.[9] Though protective of his private life and apparently rather humorless,[10] Altman was a passionate art collector. Upon his death in 1913 he left the Metropolitan Museum of Art a 1,000-item collection of Chinese porcelains, Persian rugs, Renaissance tapestries, ivories, jades, and 75 paintings by old masters.[11] It was, wrote the New York Times, "by far the most valuable gift the Metropolitan has ever seen."[12]

When Altman died, articles ran almost daily, full of loving tributes to his generosity and philanthropic nature. One read:

> Mr. Altman was a man of two great enthusiasms, his business and his art collection... to these he devoted himself with passionate affection. He had no family...he went nowhere. It was always thought in building up his great art collection that he should contribute to the enjoyment and education of the City of New York.[13]

The Move to Fifth Avenue

Testimony to Benjamin Altman's business acumen was his decision to move to the Fifth Avenue and 34th Street site. Leaving the Sixth Avenue site must have seemed, to contemporaries, quite risky, for many of Altman's largest competitors had settled on the "Fashion Row" stretch of Sixth Avenue. Stern Brother's Store, Ehrich Brother's Emporium, Adams Dry Goods, and Siegel-Cooper, all operated thriving businesses, no doubt in part because of the lively, competitive atmosphere created by their combined presence on the street.[14]

Movement of department stores northward along Manhattan Island, was, however, an established trend. New homes for old stores were being built every few decades, while their older buildings were converted to wholesale or other uses. (A recent trend has been the conversion of some surviving department store buildings to residential use.)

Despite its proximity to a large group of major department stores, Altman's Sixth Avenue location had drawbacks. The elevated subway cast a dark shadow over Sixth Avenue, and covered it with grit, as well as subjecting pedestrian shoppers to an "endless, ear-splitting clatter."[15] More important, developments uptown were making a 34th Street and Fifth Avenue location ideal. By 1902, plans to construct a new building on 34th Street and Seventh Avenue for Pennsylvania Station were already underway,[16] and in 1903 plans for the reconstruction of Grand Central Terminal on Park Avenue and 42nd Street were unveiled.[17] These two events alone turned Fifth Avenue from 34th to 42nd Streets into prime commercial property. Suddenly that stretch of the street would be within easy walking distance of both these stations, accessible both to daily commuters and to ladies from further out of town on day-long shopping excursions into the city. Local residents would prefer a Fifth Avenue site as well, since it was on an open, light-filled avenue and within walking distance of both east and west side elevated subways.[18]

Benjamin Altman bought his first lot on 34th Street and Fifth Avenue in 1896, but did not make a concerted effort to acquire the block-sized site he desired until after the announcements of the new Grand Central and Pennsylvania Stations.[19] At the time Altman began assembling the site, the pace of change on Fifth Avenue was quickening considerably. Before the Civil War the area had been farmland; historian Benson J. Lossing reported in 1845 that he had spent the morning picking blackberries on the site where B. Altman would eventually stand.[20] After the Civil War, New York's wealthy moved slowly uptown, leaving their Madison Square residences to flee the commercial enterprises which, in turn, invariably followed. From 1870 to 1900, the area of Fifth Avenue around 34th Street had gradually changed from residential to "a business thoroughfare occupied by tailors, milliners, picture dealers, decorators, and the like, whose customers consisted of a few comparatively wealthy people, and also required a small amount of space."[21] Despite the new commercial uses, however, most stores occupied "reconstructed residences," so that architecturally Fifth Avenue retained its residential appearance.[22]

The departure in 1893 of the influential Mrs. William B. Astor to a new residence on 65th Street at Fifth Avenue helped to revive the flight of the wealthy to unsullied pastures uptown.[23] The huge Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh, and built in part on the site of Mrs. Astor's old home on the west side of 34th Street at Fifth Avenue, created a more active, less residential pace. The famous hotel quickly became the meeting place of New York's socialites and politicians, as well as the location of the generation's most lavish -- and infamous -- parties.[24] On the northwest corner of 34th Street and Fifth Avenue stood the elaborate French Second Empire-style Alexander T. Stewart house, designed by John Kellum in the late 1860s; but it was no longer a private residence, having been leased in 1890 to the Manhattan Club.[25] Even a few larger commercial establishments had relocated, but they were still stores patronized only by the very rich. Tiffany's had moved from its earlier

location on the west side of Union Square at 15th Street to an elaborate building at 401 Fifth Avenue (at 37th Street) designed by Stanford White of the prestigious firm of McKim, Mead & White, built 1903-05. White also designed a new home for the Gorham Company, purveyors of the country's finest silver, built at 390 Fifth Avenue (at 35th Street) in 1906. B. Altman's plans to move in 1905 were part of a new phase of commercialization of Fifth Avenue. Nonetheless, Altman's announcement signalled that the Avenue would undergo a major change. "The peculiar importance of the Altman project," wrote one astute journalist of the day,

> consists in the fact that it is the first big store of a general character which has moved into middle Fifth Avenue.... With the Altman purchase a /new/ period has begun. A store such as this finds its customers among the whole mass of well-to-do people. The range and number of its frequenters...include almost everybody for whom cheap prices are not the first desideratum.[26]

B. Altman was not built all at once. The first section fronted on Fifth Avenue, East 34th and East 35th Streets, but had to be constructed around property at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and 34th Street which had not yet been acquired. This corner section was not completed until 1911, but was conceived as part of the original design. Comprising the two southernmost bays of the Fifth Avenue facade, and the four westernmost bays of the 34th Street facade, it is now indistinguishable from the original 1905-06 portions.[27] By contrast, the final extension of the building to Madison Avenue, while also designed by Trowbridge & Livingston and built in 1913, is four stories taller and stylistically somewhat different from the earlier portions. Its lower stories continue many of the design motifs of the 1905 structure, but their treatment is more elaborate.

There was never any organized effort to block the building of B. Altman, but many of the property owners held on to their land as long as they could; probably because they recognized that the longer they waited, the higher the price they could get for their land, and also in protest of the changes the new building would inevitably bring to the neighborhood.[28] When Altman finally acquired the first part of the site, speculation on the new shape of Fifth Avenue raged. Real Estate Record and Guide declared it "inevitable" that B. Altman's competitors would soon move too, and that Fifth Avenue would soon be quite changed:

> These buildings will...when they become sufficiently numerous, give the Avenue a very different atmosphere. Its architecture will be showy and so far unbusinesslike; but it will be adapted to fashionable stores, patronized by wealthy clients. It will be "smart" and "swell."[29]

Within a month the same magazine reported "furious real estate speculation"[30] in the blocks surrounding B. Altman; in the next several years W. & J. Sloan, Best & Company, Arnold Constable & Company, and Bergdorf-Goodman, had all re-established their businesses on "middle" Fifth Avenue.

Trowbridge & Livingston

Samuel Beck Parkman Trowbridge (1862-1925) was born in New York City, son of William Petit and Lucy Parkman Trowbridge.[31] At the time of his birth, Trowbridge's father, whose initial career was in the military, was the superintending engineer of the construction of Fort Totten Battery, repairs to Fort Schuyler, and work at Governor's Island. The work was being done to fortify the city against possible attack during the Civil War. After the War, he left the military and eventually became professor of dynamic engineering at Yale. From 1877 until his death in 1892, he was professor of engineering at the Columbia School of Mines. Undoubtedly, the younger Trowbridge was influenced in his choice of career by his father's profession.

After his early education in the city's public schools, Trowbridge did his undergraduate studies at Trinity College in Hartford. On graduating in 1883, he entered Columbia's School of Mines, and later furthered his training at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. On his return to New York, he entered the office of George B. Post. In 1894, he, Goodhue Livingston and Stockton B. Colt formed a partnership that lasted until 1897 when Colt left and the firm became Trowbridge & Livingston.

Goodhue Livingston (1867-1951), a descendant of a prominent colonial New York family, received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Columbia during the same period Trowbridge was at the school. Their partnership was to be a long and productive one.

The firm is best known for its public and commercial buildings, which, besides B. Altman, include the St. Regis Hotel (1904) at Fifth Avenue and 55th Street; Engine Company 7, Ladder Company 1 (1905) at 100 Duane Street; the banking headqurters of J.P. Morgan (1913) at 23 Wall Street; the 1923 extension to the New York Stock Exchange at 11 Wall Street; the Oregon State Capitol (1936-38), designed in association with Francis Keally; and the Hayden Planetarium (1935) of the American Museum of Natural History at West 81st Street and Central Park West.

Trowbridge & Livingston also designed a number of residential buildings in a variety of styles popular at the time, including the neo-Federal, the Beaux-Arts, and the neo-Italian Renaissance. A number of handsome examples can be found on Manhattan's Upper East Side, including Nos. 49 East 68th Street, 123 East 63rd Street, and 123 East 70th Street. In these houses the architects used a variety of materials, often combining a rusticated limestone base with brick upper stories and a copper-edged mansard roof. They also used a variety of decorative elements, enriching their facades with iron balustrades, carved garlands, escutcheons, medallions, and elaborate pedimented window surrounds.

Description

Trowbridge & Livingston's background in both dignified public buildings and elegant private town houses provided an ideal combination for the design of B. Altman. Although a large department store, the building was apparently designed to match the architectural character of the surrounding neighborhood. Trowbridge & Livingston succeeded in making the transition from residential to commercial as painless, architecturally speaking, as possible. This was accomplished by basing the architectural treatment of the enormous store on the same Italianate palazzo models that had been used, not only by prior depart-

ment stores, but also by so many of the large private mansions lining Fifth Avenue, as for instance the A.T. Stewart home across the street. The French limestone walls -- the first use on a commercial structure of a material heretofore reserved for residential buildings -- the aedicular windows, broad overhanging cornice, and elegant detailing, all helped B. Altman gracefully blend into the neighborhood.

Built in stages, B. Altman today covers the entire city block bounded by Fifth and Madison Avenues, and East 34th and 35th Streets. Eight stories tall on Fifth Avenue and on most of the side-street frontages, B. Altman rises to thirteen stories on Madison.

Fifth Avenue facade:

The B. Altman Fifth Avenue facade is nine bays wide and eight stories tall, faced in limestone which has been repaired with cast-stone patches. The first and second stories are united into a base for the facade by a colonnade formed of a giant order of what were originally engaged Ionic columns, unfluted, supporting an architrave now stripped of its detail. The columns sit on pedestals, which increase in height along the southward slope of Fifth Avenue. The central three bays project to form a grand portico enclosing the store's main entrance. The columns of the portico are more elaborate than the others; they are fluted, the intrados of their arches are adorned with roundels, and their bases have ornamental moldings in a modified Greek fret design. Their original Ionic capitals have been replaced by rosettes. Within the bays formed by the double-height columns of the colonnade, single-height engaged piers flanking windows and doors support an arch whose apex touches the architrave. On either side of the entrance portico, the two-story bays are divided into upper and lower windows, separated by an architrave. The lower, first-story window is a sheet of glass serving as a display window, above which is a canopy and its housing surmounted by a blank area of glass. The upper windows are in the configuration of a Roman Bath window, semi-circular and divided into six lights, actually comprising three one-over-one double-hung sash. The three entrance-portico bays repeat this window configuration at the second-story level, but in place of display windows, the first-story level has entrances, approached by a stone staircase. In the central bay, at the first-story level, there are three pairs of doors, in their original configuration, topped by a transom; in the bay to either side there is one set of doors and a display window. Above each entrance is a curving, Art Nouveau style metal and glass canopy, supported by elaborate wrought-metal brackets. Beneath, a metal frieze runs above the entrance and display-window. In each of these three bays, above the canopy but below the architrave separating the first from the second story, the bay is filled in with panels of glass.

The third-story level of the Fifth Avenue facade comprises a series of square-headed windows corresponding to the nine bays below. They have simple molded surrounds with a keystone at the center top; the window glass consists of three one-over-one double-hung windows, with the center windows wider than those at the sides. Between the window openings, over the giant cooumns below, are large square panels with molded edges. A band-course runs above the windows, separating this story from the next three above it.

The windows in the fourth through sixth story levels are now almost identical to those at the third-story level. They have simple sills, and no keystones. Originally each had a molded surround, and was connected to the window above by a lintel supported on console brackets; these, however, were later removed, and the windows today are plain. Above the sixth-story level runs an architrave with a frieze with triglyphs.

The seventh and eighth stories are treated visually as a double story, mirroring the two-story base. Each bay comprises a double-height arched window, with a lower seventh-story window separated from the upper eighth-story window by a horizontal element. The seventh-story window follows the configuration of the windows directly below; the eighth-story window is a Roman Bath-type configuration, similar to that at the second-story level: three one-over-one double-hung sash.

Above the eighth-story level is an entablature and heavy cornice. Guttae depend from the entablature; at the top of the cornice, marking each bay, is a decorative lion's head.

East 34th Street facade:

The East 34th Street facade is similar in design to the Fifth Avenue facade, with the following exceptions:

This facade comprises a much longer street frontage than that on Fifth Avenue, and is divided into bays as follows: from Fifth Avenue, five bays, followed by a projecting three-bay entrance portico, beyond which stretch nine more bays. Except in the entrance portico, the double-height columns of Fifth Avenue are replaced by pilasters. The entrance portico is similar to that on Fifth Avenue, but only its center bay has an entrance with elaborate canopy and staircase. Only the first four bays east from Fifth Avenue, and the first two bays west from Madison Avenue, contain display-windows. In the other bays, the area corresponding to the display windows is divided into two portions: in the upper, there are three double-hung one-over-one sash behind a metal grille; in the lower, there is a stone panel over a base. The eleventh and twelfth bays east from Fifth Avenue serve as a service entrance; they have a simple functional canopy above them.

The four eastern bays of the East 34th Street facade rise to a thirteen-story tower. The treatment of the first eight stories is identical to their treatment in the western bays; the upper five stories, faced in brick rather than in limestone, are handled as follows: the ninth story, at the level of the cornice to the west, comprises paired double-hung one-over-one windows, above which is a band course. The tenth and eleventh stories are treated as a unit, with paired double-hung one-over-one windows, recessed; within the recess, the windows are separated by a slender double-height Ionic column and architrave, from which spring small arches. A band course separates these windows from the twelfth-story level, which is identical in treatment to the ninth-story level. A corbelled band course in turn separates the twelfth from the thirteenth story, which has similar window treatment; the thirteenth story is capped by a small cornice.

Madison Avenue facade:

The Madison Avenue facade is related in design to the Fifth Avenue facade, but is not identical. The first and second stories form a base similar to that on Fifth Avenue, but have no projecting central portico. Instead, the single bay at either end projects slightly. The central bay of the facade has a single entrance, with an elaborate ornamental canopy matching those on Fifth Avenue.

The end bay at either corner is limestone-faced with cast-stone patches from the first to the eighth stories, and brick-faced above. The inner bays are limestone-faced only at the first two stories, and brick-faced above. The end bays are further distinguished from the inner bays by having narrower windows, and hence being heavier in appearance, creating the effect of end pavilions.

The brick-faced inner bays are treated as follows: The third-story level consists of paired double-hung one-over-one windows. The fourth- through sixth-story bays are treated as a three-story unit, comprising three-story brick piers supporting a stone architrave. Within the brick piers, the windows are divided further into three small bays by a metal framework. At the fourth story level in each bay, the three smaller bays are formed by two slender Corinthian columns on tall pedestals, supporting an architrave; the architrave breaks forward over the central small bay and supports a segmental pediment. This form is repeated at the fifth-story level with Ionic columns and an architrave, but with no pediment or pedestals; it is repeated again at the sixth-story level with no architrave, pediment or pedestals, but with console brackets supported by the columns. The seventh- and eighth-story levels, separated from the lower levels by an architrave, are treated as a double-height arcade defined by brick piers, with a paneled effect; the brick arches have stone-faced keystones. Within the piers, at the seventh-story level, the window is divided into three smaller bays, of double-hung one-over-one sash, defined by slender colonnettes; the sash at the eighth-story level are in a Roman Bath window configuration. At the ninth-story level, each bay consists of a pair of square-headed one-over-one double-hung windows. The tenth and eleventh stories are a modified reprise of the design of the fourth- through sixth-story levels: two-story, double-hung one-over-one paired sash, separated by Ionic columns from which spring small arches. The twelfth-story bays comprise square-headed one-over-one double-hung windows, above which is a level of brick corbelling. The final, thirteenth-story bays comprise paired double-hung windows topped by a small cornice.

The stone-faced outer bays above the second-story level are treated as follows: At the third- through sixth-story levels, the windows are comprised of three double-hung one-over-one sash with a wide central portion and narrow sides. The seventh- and eighth-story levels have windows which in design are a modified version of those at the same level in the inner bays. The ninth- to thirteenth-story levels are brick-faced, with narrower versions of the windows of the inner bays at the same level.

East 35th Street facade:

The East 35th Street facade is similar to that on East 34th Street, but different in certain details; East 34th Street is a major cross-town artery, and therefore its facade has a somewhat more elaborate treatment than that on East 35th Street, as well as a major entrance.

The bays in the two-story base along East 35th Street, from Fifth to Madison Avenue, include: three bays of display-windows, a fourth-bay single entrance, eight bays of windows behind grilles, a service entrance in the thirteenth bay, a loading bay in the fourteenth bay, windows behind grilles and a service entrance in the fifteenth bay, a window behind a grille in the sixteenth bay, and a display-window in the seventeenth bay at the corner of Madison Avenue. The fourth-bay entrance has a projecting metal entrance porch comprising three sets of doors under an entablature with a classical frieze; the entablature is supported at either end by elaborate metal piers. Transoms above are topped by a cornice

and simple pediment. The thirteenth- and fifteenth-bay entrances now have nondescript shelters in front of them. Above the two-story base, the treatment of the East 35th Street facade is similar to that on East 34th Street. Utility sheds on the roof are partially visible.

Conclusion

B. Altman opened to critical acclaim. "The architecture is classic," wrote a critic from the New York Times, "doorway and entrance columns are handsomely decorated.... The store adds materially to the beauty of Fifth Avenue."[32] The building was, and remains, a powerful presence on the Avenue, eloquent testimony to B. Altman's position as a pathbreaker in the development of Fifth Avenue in Midtown.

After Benjamin Altman's death in 1913, just a year after completion of the Madison Avenue extension to his store, it continued in operation, but under an unusual arrangement.[33] Altman's will, besides providing for the donation of his art collection to the Metropolitan Museum, also created an "Altman Foundation" whose purpose was to run the store

> to promote the social, physical or economic welfare and efficiency of the employees of B. Altman and Company...and to the use and benefit of charitable, benevolent or educational institutions within the state of New York.[34]

The idea of running the store to benefit its employees was consistent with Benjamin Altman's history of enlightened employee treatment.[35]

As other large department stores followed Altman's lead, Fifth Avenue, as predicted, was transformed into New York's premier shopping street, lined from 34th to 59th Streets with stores that became flagships for such national chains as Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf-Goodman, Lord & Taylor, and many others not all of which survive. B. Altman's elegant structure at 34th Street, first to be built, came to serve as the grand entrance to the Fifth Avenue shopping corridor.

Today, although the B. Altman building has undergone some renovations due to the deterioration of the limestone, it remains essentially intact. Spalls have been patched with cast stone instead of limestone. Column capitals at the ground floor have been removed, as have the fourth- and fifth-story lintels. Band courses and roof cornices have been simplified. Yet the basic design elements, including the beautifully ornate entrances, survive unchanged. And the atmosphere of "middle" Fifth Avenue, set by the opening of B. Altman almost eighty years ago, survives as well. The B. Altman & Company building remains an exemplar of American neo-Renaissance commercial design, and a landmark in the cultural history of New York.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Harry E. Resseguie, "A.T. Stewart's Marble Palace--The Cradle of the Department Store," in New-York Historical Society Quarterly, 43(1964), 133-135. Stewart's imitators and successors included Potter Palmer of Chicago, Palmer's student Marshall Field, and Field's protege Harry Gordon Selfridge, who brought the principles of the department store to London.

2. For a general study of the development of the department store and commercial development of lower Manhattan, see the Studio Report for Christine Boyer at Columbia University, Ladies Mile: The History of the Retail Shopping District of Manhattan in the 19th Century (New York: unpublished typescript, Spring 1981).

3. See Charles Lockwood, Manhattan Moves Uptown (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

4. New York Times, October 8, 1913.

5. New York Times, December 11, 1904, p.8.

6. Quoted in the New York Times, Ibid.

7. Gerard R. Wolfe, New York: A Guide to the Metropolis (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p.207.

8. Ibid.

9. Fifty Years on Fifth, Fifth Avenue Association, ed. (New York: International Press, 1957), p.52.

10. Robert Henrickson, The Grand Emporium: The Illustrated History of America's Great Department Stores (New York: Stein & Day, 1979), p.161.

11. New York Times, October 9, 1913, p.12:3.

12. New York Times, October 15, 1913, p.5:1.

13. New York Times, October 16, 1913, p.5:1.

14. New York Times, April 21, 1906, p.14.

15. Wolfe, p.196.

16. John A. Kouwenhoven, Columbia Historical Portrait of New York (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1953), p.427.

17. A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White, 1879-1915 (New York: Arno, 1977), p.38.

18. The New York Times wrote that the new location "is an ideal one from the viewpoint of the shopping public. The El is one block away in either direction, and it is accessible by crosstown cars and, eventually, a crosstown subway on thirty-fourth Street. And it is in close proximity to Grand Central Station and the Pennsylvania Terminal." December 11, 1904, p.8.

19. This can be discerned from property records which state the dates each lot was sold to Altman. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds, Liber 105, p.435; 110, p.249; 109, p.266; 106, p.353; 107, p.27-30; 102, p.57; 100, p.290, p.263; 96, p.417; 97, p.287; 78, p.461; 77, p.1; 70, p.186; 43, p. 392.

20. Fifty Years on Fifth, pp.2-3.

21. Real Estate Record and Guide, Dec. 17, 1904, p.1346.

22. Ibid.

23. Lockwood, p.301.

24. Frederick Platt, The Gilded Age: Its Architecture and Decoration (Cranbury, N.J.: A.S. Barnes), pp.90-91.

25. Arthur Bartless Maurice, Fifth Avenue (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1918), p.245.

26. Real Estate Record and Guide, Dec. 17, 1904, p.1346.

27. See attached photographs.

28. "There was always a chance that Altman might not secure as much property as he needed, and that his purpose would have to be abandoned." Real Estate Record and Guide, December 17, 1904, p.1346.

29. Ibid.

30. Real Estate Record and Guide, January 28, 1905, p.183.

31. This summary of Trowbridge & Livingston is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report (LP-1051) (New York: City of New York, 1981), pp.1359-1360.

32. New York Times, October 16, 1906, p.6.

33. New York Times, October 9, 1913, p.12.

34. The Foundation was established by Chapter 149 of New York Laws of 1913.

35. As a result of the IRS "excess business holding rule" (26 U.S.C. §4943), the Altman Foundation decided in 1984 to divest itself of its holdings of B. Altman stock. A contract to sell has been entered into with a group of investors, who intend, upon final acquisition, to continue a retail operation in a portion of the department store building, and to develop new uses for other portions. New York Times, May 13, 1984, p.38; November 28, 1984.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

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 B. Altman Company Department Store Building has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the B. Altman & Company Department Store Building was the first and one of the handsomest of the flagship department stores on Fifth Avenue; that its construction in 1905-13 acted as a catalyst in the transformation of Fifth Avenue north of 34th Street into a grand boulevard lined with large, high-class department stores; that the architects, Trowbridge & Livingston, created an elegant Italian-Renaissance palazzo type design, reserved and stately in character, which was designed to blend with the then residential appearance of the area; that despite the removal of some decorative elements, the building retains its identity and significance; and that B. Altman survives today as a keystone to the identity of Fifth Avenue as home to the city's best-known department stores.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Prservation Commission designates as a Landmark the B. Altman & Company Department Store Building, 355-371 Fifth Avenue, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 864, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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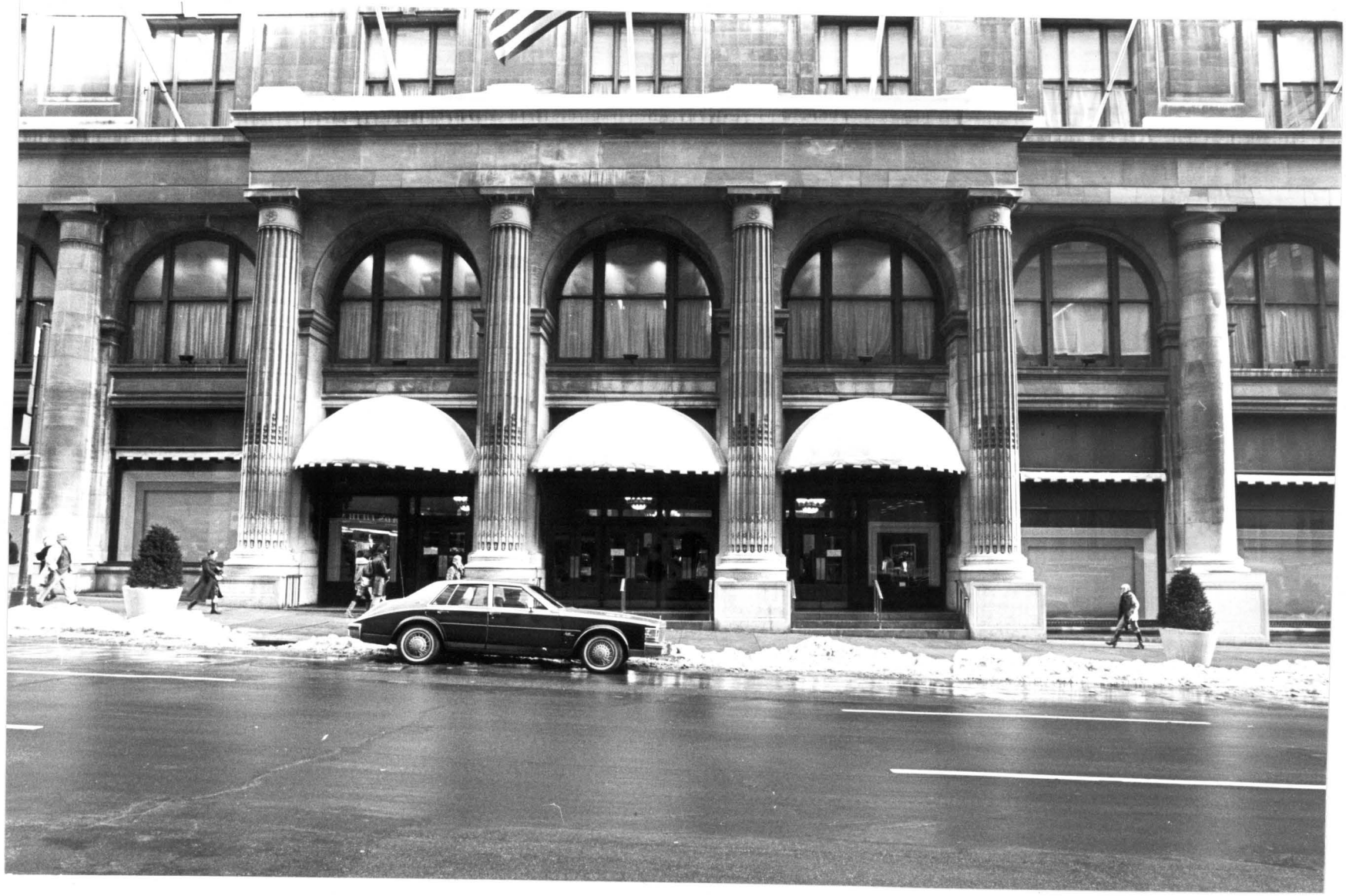
B. Altman & Company
Department Store Building

Construction of 1911 addition
Fifth Avenue and 34th Street



B. Altman & Company
Department Store Building

Fifth Avenue entrance

Photo Credit: Carl Forster
Landmarks Commission

B. Altman & Company
Department Store Building

34th Street facade
as originally built
1905-06

B. Altman & Company
Department Store Building

Photo Credit: Carl Forster
Landmarks Commission

Madison Avenue facade

Built: 1905-13
Architects: Trowbridge & Livingston

B. Altman & Company
Department Store Building
355-371 Fifth Avenue
Manhattan

Photo Credit: Carl Forste
Landmarks Commission

Fifth Avenue facade