

BROADWAY CHAMBERS BUILDING

273-277 Broadway, Manhattan. Built 1899-1900. Cass Gilbert, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 149, Lot 33.

On December 12, 1989, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Broadway Chambers Building, 273-277 Broadway, Manhattan, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 17). The building owner's representative requested that the hearing be continued. Six witnesses testified in favor of designation. Community Board 1 submitted a resolution in favor of designation. The hearing was continued to April 3, 1990 (Item No. 15). At that hearing the owner's representative took no position regarding the proposed designation and requested that the record be kept open. Three witnesses testified in favor of designation. The hearing was closed and the record was left open for sixty days. The hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The Broadway Chambers Building is a distinctive, international award-winning office building designed by the prominent architect, Cass Gilbert, in the Beaux-Arts style, a classically-inspired style that became popular in the United States after the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. Built in 1899-1900,¹ the building is notable for the striking use of color in its design which employs a tripartite scheme analogous to the classical column. Preeminent critic, Montgomery Schuyler, called the Broadway Chambers Building, "...the summation of that type of design of a tall building." Each element of the design -- granite base, brick shaft, and glazed terra-cotta capital -- is differentiated by material and color. The use of polychromy to emphasize the different nature of each material and to enhance the tripartite scheme distinguishes the Broadway Chambers Building from many of its contemporaries which were often executed in a light monochrome palette following the example of the great exhibit halls of the Chicago Exposition. As is characteristic of the Beaux-Arts style, the building is richly ornamented, incorporating Hermes and lions heads in a monumental scale, a dramatically arcuated crown and a wealth of garlands, wreaths, and festoons. The building is important within Gilbert's career because it was his first design built in New York City -- to be followed by such landmarks as the U.S. Customs House and the Woolworth Building.

History of the Site²

The Broadway Chambers Building is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Broadway and Chambers Street. Broadway is one of the oldest roads on Manhattan Island and sections of it predate European settlement. Chambers Street, named after John Chambers, a corporate counsel, alderman, and Supreme Court Justice between 1727 and 1765, was ceded to the City of New York by the Trinity Church Corporation in 1761. The land on which the Broadway Chambers Building stands was first developed by Anthony Steenbach about 1791 with a row of one-story buildings fronting on Chambers Street. In the early nineteenth century, the stretch of Broadway between Chambers and Worth Streets was a mixture of residential buildings and substantial institutions such as Washington Hall (1809-12) which was designed by John McComb, Jr., one of the architects of the City Hall, and was the headquarters of the Washington Benevolent Society, a Federalist organization; and the New York Hospital (opened 1791) which occupied the west side of Broadway between Duane and Worth Streets. Broadway, north of Chambers Street, maintained a combination of institutions, residences, and shops until A.T. Stewart built his famous department store on the site of Washington Hall in 1846. The building, later known as the Sun Building, still stands and is a designated New York City Landmark. The character of Broadway north of Chambers rapidly became strictly commercial. Philip Hone, the noted diarist of the period, wrote in 1850:

The mania for converting Broadway into a street of shops is greater than ever. There is scarcely a block in the whole extent of this fine street of which some part is not in a state of transmutation.³

In 1852, a writer in the magazine, *Gleason's Pictorial*, observed:

The entire length of Broadway seems to have been measured for a new suit of marble and freestone-- six and seven story buildings going up on its whole length, of most magnificent elegance in style...with Aladin-like splendor and celerity.⁴

It was about this time that a five-story masonry building was erected on the northwest corner of Broadway and Chambers Street, the future site of the Broadway Chambers Building.

In 1896, Edward R. Andrews, a member of a prominent and wealthy Boston family, initiated negotiations for the construction of a new office building to be erected on the family's property on the northwest corner of Broadway and Chambers Street. Andrews may have been encouraged to improve the property for investment purposes because of the recent upswing in real estate development around City Hall Park. A number of new buildings had appeared: R.H. Robertson's American Tract Society Building (1894); George B. Post's Pulitzer Building (1892, demolished); George Edward Harding & William T. Gooch's Postal Telegraph Company Building (1892-94); and Napoleon Le Brun & Sons's Home Life Building (1892-94) (the two latter buildings are now joined into one complex that is a designated New York City Landmark). Alexander S. Porter, a Boston lawyer and broker, introduced Andrews to the architect, Cass Gilbert, whose Second Brazer Building was built that same year, 1896, on State Street in Boston. Porter had been one of the financial investors in the construction of the Second Brazer Building. However, it was not until March, 1899, that a contract for the construction of a new building on the site, to be known as the Broadway Chambers, was signed by Andrews and Gilbert.



Fig. 1: The Broadway Chambers Building, 273-277 Broadway, view from the southeast.
(Photo Credit: Carl Forster.)

The Architect⁵

Cass Gilbert (1859-1933) was born in Zanesville, Ohio, and as a youth moved with his family to St. Paul, Minnesota. After completing his secondary education, he entered the office of Abraham M. Radcliffe, a local architect with an extensive practice in Minneapolis-St. Paul. In 1878, Gilbert was admitted to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he studied until 1880 when he left to travel in Europe. On his return to this country that same year, he joined the office of McKim, Mead & White where he remained for two years before returning to St. Paul to begin his own practice. During the early days of his independent practice, Gilbert maintained a professional relationship with McKim, Mead & White, collaborating with that firm on some of its work for the Northern Pacific Railroad. In 1884, he entered into partnership with a fellow student from M.I.T., John Knox Taylor, which lasted until 1894. Gilbert's work in St. Paul includes commercial, religious, and domestic buildings. His houses are rendered in picturesque combinations of the Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Shingle Style, and the Prairie School. The Summit Avenue area of St. Paul, a fashionable residential section of the city which was developed in the late nineteenth century on the high bluffs above the Mississippi River, contains a number of houses designed by Gilbert which contribute to the area's overall architectural quality. After visiting the neighborhood in 1891, the architectural critic, Montgomery Schuyler, favorably compared Summit Avenue to Newport, Rhode Island, writing that he had found no badly designed houses there.⁶

Gilbert was very active in promoting the professional status of architects in the Midwest and was the founder of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. When the competition for the Minnesota State Capitol was announced in 1893, Gilbert aggressively sought the commission which, after two years of deliberation, he was awarded in 1896. His capitol, a handsome Beaux-Arts neo-Classical building, along with the Rhode Island State Capitol designed by McKim, Mead & White, have been called by the architectural historian, Henry-Russell Hitchcock:

*...important models...which loomed
behind every other project of that kind*

*for a whole generation. If any
American capitols ever represented
the high style of the period, it is
these two.*⁷

The Minnesota State Capitol gained for Gilbert a national reputation. The same year in which he won that competition, he received a commission to design a commercial building in the heart of Boston, the Second Brazer Building, which proved to be instrumental in Gilbert's gaining the commission to design the Broadway Chambers Building in New York. The Second Brazer Building was developed by a consortium of investors including heirs of the Brazer family and local businessmen, among whom was Alexander S. Porter, a Boston lawyer and broker. A tripartite, eleven-story Beaux-Arts building of white limestone and terra cotta, it is one of the earliest steel-framed skyscrapers in Boston, and is also Gilbert's only work in that city. Elements of both the Minnesota State Capitol and the Second Brazer Building foreshadow the Broadway Chambers Building. The Beaux-Arts, tripartite design of the Brazer Building is followed in the Broadway Chambers Building and there is a striking similarity between the entrance loggia of the Minnesota State Capitol and the crowning arcade of the Broadway Chambers Building.

The Broadway Chambers Building is important within Gilbert's career because it was his first design built in New York though he enjoyed a well-established practice in the Midwest. Also, the building was executed at a time when Gilbert's reputation was surrounded by controversy. In March, 1899, just prior to the beginning of construction of the Broadway Chambers Building, Gilbert moved his office from St. Paul to New York and entered the competition for the design of the United States Customs House in New York (now a designated New York City Landmark). The competition was an acrimonious affair that involved charges against the Federal Government of favoritism in awarding the commission to Gilbert because James Knox Taylor, Gilbert's former partner in St. Paul, was then the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury (1897-1912), the governmental department which judged the competition, and Taylor was a member of the jury.⁸ In the midst of the controversy, which was well reported in the press and often became quite personal in regard to Gilbert, work rapidly progressed on the Broadway Chambers Building.

When the Broadway Chambers Building opened in April, 1900, it was a critical success.

With the passing of the Customs House controversy and the success of the Broadway Chambers Building, Gilbert went on to design the massive West Street Building (1906-07), whose Gothic-inspired terra-cotta facades emphasize verticality and the building's steel-frame skeleton, a departure from the tripartite masonry cladding of the Broadway Chambers Building. The West Street Building is the stylistic forerunner of the towering Woolworth Building (1911-13) for which Gilbert is most remembered. He went on to enjoy an illustrious career of national extent, producing a number of important public buildings. Among his prominent and prestigious buildings are: the Arkansas State Capitol (1900-1917); the West Virginia State Capitol (1930-1933); the U.S. Treasury Annex (1918); the U.S. Supreme Court Building (1933-1935); the Federal Courthouse in New York (1933-36), a designated New York City Landmark; the George Washington Bridge in New York (1931); and the campus plans for the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis (1908-1910) and the University of Texas.

Design of the Broadway Chambers Building⁹

When opened in April, 1900, the Broadway Chambers Building was recognized internationally as a distinguished New York City skyscraper, garnering a number of awards at the International Universal Exposition held in Paris that year.¹⁰ The building is one of the best examples of a solution to an architectural problem that had challenged New York architects during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. That problem had been to produce an aesthetically effective treatment for the tall commercial building, a relatively new building type in the city.

The evolution of the skyscraper as a building type during the nineteenth century was influenced by the introduction of the passenger elevator, cast-iron and steel-frame construction, and rising land costs. The use of cast-iron as a structural and facade material began to flower at the end of the 1840s and in the early 1850s, encouraged, in part, by Daniel Badger and James Bogardus. The fabrication of the cast-iron facade produced a system of standardization for building units that led to speed and economy in the erection of buildings. These systems, along with the elevator,

were instrumental in the creation of the modern skyscraper. The system of iron framing developed at that time which was later translated into steel made it possible for the construction of tall buildings that were strong yet lightweight and open in their structure, maximized valuable rental space by allowing for increased height, and, by eliminating bulky masonry bearing walls and piers, freed the interior partitions and exterior walls from any load-bearing function.

As building heights began to respond to technological advances in the 1870s and 1880s, architects started to grapple with the implications for style and design. An array of varied stylistic responses to tall buildings during these decades was characterized in 1909 by critic Montgomery Schuyler as "wild work." By the late 1880s, designers of tall buildings began to adopt a tripartite scheme that remained popular for several decades. The concept of the scheme was an analogy between a building's elevation and a classical column, in which the bottom stories correspond to the column's base, the tall central section to its shaft, and the upper stories to its capital. Schuyler, who first identified the analogy, wrote that the Broadway Chambers Building was "...the summation of that type of design of a tall building, the 'last word' in the prosecution of the analogy of the classical column."¹¹

The use of classical architecture as a source for a contemporary design by the architects of the 1890s was particularly marked after the great success of the Columbian Exposition held at Chicago in 1893. The most influential group of buildings at the Exposition were those in a section called the Court of Honor, an area of Frederick Law Olmsted's landscape in which monumental, classically-inspired, white exhibition halls were arranged along an axially planned waterscape. When asked what influence the Exposition would have on American architecture, Daniel Burnham, the noted architect and Director of Works at the Exposition, said:

The influence of the Exposition on architecture will be to inspire a reversion toward the pure ideal of the ancients. We have been in an inventive period, and have had rather contempt for the classics. Men evolved new ideas and imagined they could start a new school without much reference to

*the past. But action and reaction are equal, and the exterior and obvious result will be that men will strive to do classic architecture.*¹²

This monumental, classically-inspired architecture became known as the Beaux-Arts style, named after the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris where many American architects were trained and where students were required to have a thorough knowledge of and fluency in classical architecture. Though not trained at the Ecole, Gilbert chose this French-inspired style for the Broadway Chambers Building.

Schuyler wrote further about the Broadway Chambers Building that:

*The distinction of the parts by color, since they could not be effectively distinguished by form, was the next advance in the execution of the accepted scheme [the tripartite division]. This differentiation was the architectural novelty and distinction of the Broadway Chambers.*¹³

The rusticated base of the building is pale pink granite with purple overtones; the shaft is a combination of deep red and blue brick; and the richly embellished arcuated capital is beige terra cotta with Pompeian red, blue-green and greenish yellow glazed highlights, and a green copper cornice. The color green was more pronounced before the cornice was modified and the copper cheneau was removed in 1925.

The striking use of color in the building not only separated the Broadway Chambers Building from its contemporaries, which were often designed in a light monochrome after the great exhibit halls at the Chicago Exposition, but still defines it as one of the city's important early skyscrapers. The building's color scheme appears to have been a joint decision agreed upon by Gilbert and Andrews, although Gilbert seems to have preferred a monochromatic treatment of buff terra cotta and/or brick like his Second Brazer Building. But Andrews insisted on color, preferring the color scheme of the buildings at Columbia College which he visited with Gilbert and independently. Andrews wrote to Gilbert at least twice on the issue:

I should much regret to give up and return to the idea of terracotta [sic] both on account of the

*increased expense and because we should lose the strong characteristics which the brick we had decided upon would give us and contrast with almost all the other high buildings which are either stone or terracotta.*¹⁴

A week later, Andrews wrote again to Gilbert:

*[P]ersonally I am strongly in favor of color. Yesterday I went with my son to see the Columbia College buildings and was favorably impressed by the Harvard bricks and it does seem that the Bedford stone harmonizes well with them...I am confident...if we use terracotta or light brick our building will not be so unique as we hoped it would.*¹⁵

The color scheme of the Broadway Chambers Building is also firmly rooted in nineteenth-century architectural color theory, specifically in John Ruskin's idea of "constructional polychromy." Prior to Ruskin, early in the nineteenth century, European architects' interest in architectural polychromy was spurred by archaeological work at classical sites in the Mediterranean basin which proved that ancient Greek temples and sculpture were not pristinely white. On the contrary, they were vividly colored. Based on these findings, theories of architectural polychromy were postulated by French, German, and English architects such as Jacques-Ignace Hittorff, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Gottfried Semper, Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, Owen Jones, and others. A common element in most of these early theories was that color should be applied to various parts of a building, usually painted on.

At mid-century, the British art critic, John Ruskin, wrote two works that had a great impact on American architecture, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53). In these works, Ruskin differed from the earlier theorists in that he believed that color should not merely be applied to a building. Rather, a facade's polychromy should be an honest expression of the natural color of its structural materials. His view, based on medieval masonry buildings he studied, has been characterized as one that holds that masonry buildings are "...essentially a matter of horizontal layering...and this fact

should be shown as clearly as possible by introducing different coloured materials...."¹⁶ William Butterfield's All Saints' Church (1850-59), Margaret Street, London, was the first building designed with extensive constructional polychromy and it introduced the High Victorian Gothic style. Later nineteenth-century architects sought to apply constructional polychromy to a wide variety of building types in period styles such as the Queen Anne, and the Arts and Crafts style. The Broadway Chambers Building, thought built nearly fifty years after Ruskin and Butterfield, clearly shows their influence in the differentiation of its materials by color.

Construction¹⁷

Actual construction of the Broadway Chambers Building began after the site was cleared in May, 1899. There were problems with the laying of the foundations which delayed work, as did fires at the mills which were producing the interior woodwork and the copper for the roof. In April, 1900, tenants began to move into the building.

A number of important companies were involved in the construction of the Broadway Chambers Building. The project was overseen by the George A. Fuller Company, one of the leading construction firms in the country. The company had erected Gilbert's Second Brazer Building in Boston, and the Broadway Chambers Building was its first commission in New York. The company, which was one of the financial investors in the project, had been founded by George A. Fuller (1851-1900) who was trained as an architect at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He started his career in Boston as a draftsman with the architectural firm of Peabody & Stearns, becoming a partner by the age of twenty-five. More interested in the construction phase of the business than in design, he started his own contracting firm. Between 1880 and 1882, he was a partner in the firm of Clark & Fuller, building the Union Club and the Chicago Opera House in Chicago. He formed his own company in 1882 and one of his first jobs was the Pontiac Building. His company built one of the first completely steel-framed skyscrapers in Chicago, the Tacoma Building. Fuller was instrumental in differentiating the contractor's role from that of the designer, and, breaking with common practice, provided only

building services. Fuller's extensive knowledge of construction and his interest in new technology being developed at the time for high-rise buildings gained his company a reputation as a premier skyscraper builder.

In 1902, Harry S. Black, Fuller's son-in-law and then head of the company, hired Daniel Burnham to design an imposing headquarters building for the firm in New York. The Fuller Building which resulted is located at the intersection of Broadway and Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street, on a triangular lot facing Madison Square. The building received much publicity but the popular name, the Flatiron, soon eclipsed that of the owners. In 1928, the Fuller Company decided to build new headquarters uptown at 593-599 Madison Avenue. Both of these buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.

The company, which is still in practice, has constructed thousands of buildings in New York, throughout this country, and abroad. The company's New York work includes, besides the Broadway Chambers Building, the old Pennsylvania Station (demolished) and the main U.S. Post Office, both designed by McKim, Mead & White; the Plaza Hotel designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh; the United Nations Headquarters; Lever House, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; and the Seagram Building, designed by Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson, and Kahn & Jacobs. In Washington D.C., Fuller built the National Cathedral, Gilbert's U.S. Supreme Court, and the Lincoln Memorial.

The terra cotta used on the Broadway Chambers Building was manufactured by the Perth Amboy Terra Cotta Company of New Jersey, a company that was regarded by architects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the most important and innovative terra cotta producer in the country. Its history dates back to 1846, but it began producing architectural terra cotta in the 1870s. The company's first important work was George B. Post's Long Island Historical Society Building (1877), still standing in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District. Many technical advances in the production of architectural terra cotta were made by this company. It was the first to produce a wide selection of polychromatic terra cotta which previously had been limited to buffs, yellows, and shades of red. Because of the successful experimentation by the Perth Amboy Company,

architects were able to choose from a wide spectrum of colors and finishes. Both matte and high gloss terra cotta are used on the upper stories of the Broadway Chambers Building.¹⁸

Hecla Iron Works, one of the leading producers of ornamental iron and bronze work at the turn of the century, provided the ornamental ironwork and elevator cages for the building. The bricks were manufactured by the T.B. Townsend Brick Company of Zanesville, Ohio, Gilbert's birthplace, and the granite came from the John Pierce Company of Stony Creek, Connecticut.

Description

The building has a trabeated base of monumental, two-story rusticated granite piers with Tuscan capitals that are enriched with plaques, cartouches, and festoons. The piers carry a simple entablature with the name of the building, "Broadway Chambers," inscribed on the frieze of the Broadway facade; simple circles mark the frieze of the Chambers Street facade. The corners of the frieze are enhanced by garlands. The third story, which is also granite, is characterized by bays of paired, square-headed windows separated by smooth pilasters with stylized Ionic capitals. Rusticated piers which flank the bays are crowned by festoons; the corner piers have plaques with ram heads holding wreaths. A simple entablature marks the transition from the granite lower floors to the eleven-story main section of the building which is brick laid up to simulate rustication. All the windows are square-headed and contain one-over-one double-hung sash. At the base of the fifteenth story is a terra-cotta foliate band that extends around the four sides of the building. The fifteenth story features terra-cotta bands. Above the square-headed windows is an entablature consisting of a floral garland with polychromatic circles and a dentilled cornice. The sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth stories are faced with elaborately ornamented terra cotta. The sixteenth and seventeenth stories are joined in a monumental, polychromatic arcade which echoes the monumental treatment of the ground story.

Each arch is flanked by panelled pilasters and spanned at its base by an ornamental iron balcony with a central flambeau. The lintels of the windows of the sixteenth story are ornamented by central circles with side panels and dentilled cornices. The eighteenth story has enframed, square-headed windows flanked by floral wreaths crowned by large Hermes heads. At each corner are lion heads, projecting plaques and pendants of fruit. A modillioned copper cornice crowns the building.

The north and west elevations are designed in the same manner as the main facades on Broadway and Chambers Street but the upper three stories are faced in brick rather than terra cotta and are simply detailed.

Subsequent History

The Broadway Chambers Building remains in use as a commercial office building and is remarkably intact although changes have been made to the building. The copper cheneau crowning the roof cornice was removed in 1925 and the storefront infill between the piers of the ground floor has been changed over the years. When first opened, the main entrance to the building was in the northernmost bay on Broadway. That bay is still used as the main entrance but the original ornamental transom screen and the flanking plinths which carried three-branched torches have been removed. There was a store in each bay to the south of the entrance toward Chambers Street and on Chambers Street there was a third store located in the westernmost bay. Today, there are two stores in the bays south of the entrance on Broadway but there are now two stores on Chambers Street and the westernmost bay is a service entrance.

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NOTES

1. New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 149, Lot 33. NB 264-99.
2. The information in this section is based on: Moses King, *King's Views of New York 1896-1915 & Brooklyn 1905* (reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1980), 9; *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York 1784-1831*, vol. 2 (New York: City of New York, 1917), 249-254; I.N. Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, vols. 5,6 (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915-1928); Sharon Lee Irish, "Cass Gilbert's Career in New York, 1899-1905," Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1985; D.T. Valentine, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York, 1865* (New York: Edmond Jones & Co., 1865), 567-572; Henry Moscow, *The Street Book, An Encyclopedia of Manhattan's Street Names and Their Origins* (New York: Hagstrom Company, Inc., 1978), 37.
3. Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone*, vol. 2, ed. Allan Nevins (New York, 1927), 896.
4. *Gleason's Pictorial*, 3 (Nov. 1, 1852), 371, cited in Stokes, vol. 4, under the heading "1852 Nov. 13."
5. The information contained in this section is based on: Abraham Maby Radcliffe Building List, Northwest Architectural Archives, University Libraries, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota; Boston Landmarks Commission, *The Second Brazer Building*, report prepared by Dierdre Savage, 1985; David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, *Temples of Democracy The State Capitols of the U.S.A.* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); Irish; Robert Allen Jones, "Cass Gilbert, Midwestern Architect in New York," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1972; William Jordy and Ralph Coe, *American Architecture and Other Writings by Montgomery Schuyler*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961); *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, ed. Adolf K. Placzek, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., Free Press, 1982); National Register of Historic Places, *Second Brazer Building*, U.S. Department of the Interior: Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Services, form prepared by Carol Kennedy, 1986; Leland Roth, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White 1870-1920, A Building List* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978); Elliot Willensky and Norval White, *AIA Guide to New York City* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988); Henry Withey and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1970).
6. Jordy and Coe, 321.
7. Hitchcock and Seale, 218.
8. Traditionally, all Federally-funded Government building projects were designed by architects working in the Department of the Treasury. In 1892, after strenuous lobbying by the American Institute of Architects, the Tarsney Act was passed which opened Federal building projects to architectural competition at the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury. The Act was repealed in 1912.
9. The information in this section is based on: Irish; Jones; Jordy and Coe; Sarah Bradford Landau, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Reconsidered: Arcaded Buildings of the New York School, c.1870-1890," in *In Search of Modern Architecture: A Tribute to Henry-Russell Hitchcock*, ed. Helen Searing (New York: MIT Press, 1982); Landmarks Preservation Commission, *SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report* (LP-0768), report prepared by Karen Graham Wade, Marjorie Pearson, and James T. Dillon (New York, 1973); LPC, *Woolworth Building Designation Report* (LP-1273), report prepared by Anthony W.

Robins (New York, 1983); R.D. Middleton, "Hittorff's polychrome campaign," in *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*, ed. Robin D. Middleton (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1982); David Van Zanten, *The Architectural Polychromy of the 1830's* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977); Van Zanten, "Architectural polychromy: life in architecture," in *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*.

10. Jones, 76-77.
11. Montgomery Schuyler, *The Woolworth Building* (New York: the Woolworth Company, 1913), cited in Jordy and Coe, 614.
12. Ibid., 557.
13. Schuyler, cited in Jordy and Coe, 614.
14. Quoted in Irish, 163-164.
15. Ibid., 164.
16. Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 202.
17. The information contained in this section is based on: Irish; Cass Gilbert Collection, Broadway Chambers Building Correspondence Files, List of Subcontractors, January 16, 1900, New York Historical Society; Cass Gilbert, "Building Skyscrapers," *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide* 65, no. 1684 (June 23, 1900), 1085-1091; LPC, *Fuller Building Designation Report* (LP-1460), report prepared by Janet Adams (New York, 1986); *A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City* (1898, reprint, New York: Arno Press Inc., 1967), 505, 509-528, 531.
18. The Broadway Chambers Building is an excellent example of the use of polychromatic glazed terra cotta. The building may be the earliest extant example of the use of this material for a commercial building in the city. The Broadway Chambers Building predates McKim, Mead & White's Madison Square Presbyterian Church (1903-06, demolished) which is thought to be the first example of the extensive use of polychromatic glazed terra cotta.

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 Broadway Chambers 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 Broadway Chambers Building is a distinctive, international award-winning office building designed by the prominent architect, Cass Gilbert; that the building, erected between 1899-1900, was important within Gilbert's career because it was his first design built in New York City; that it is designed in the Beaux-Arts style and, as is characteristic of the style, the building is richly ornamented with monumental sculpted figures, a dramatically arcuated crown, and a wealth of garlands, wreaths, and festoons; that the Broadway Chambers Building is notable for its polychromy and early use of glazed terra cotta; and that, at the time it was built, the building was considered one of the best examples of the tripartite design scheme which is analogous to the classical column and was characterized by the preeminent critic, Montgomery Schuyler, as, "...the summation of that type of design of a tall building."

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of 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 Broadway Chambers Building, 273-277 Broadway, Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 149, Lot 33, as its Landmark Site.



Fig. 2: Detail of ornament at second and third story, Broadway Facade.
(Photo Credit: Carl Forster.)



Fig. 3: Arcuated crown, Broadway Facade. (Photo Credit: Carl Forster)

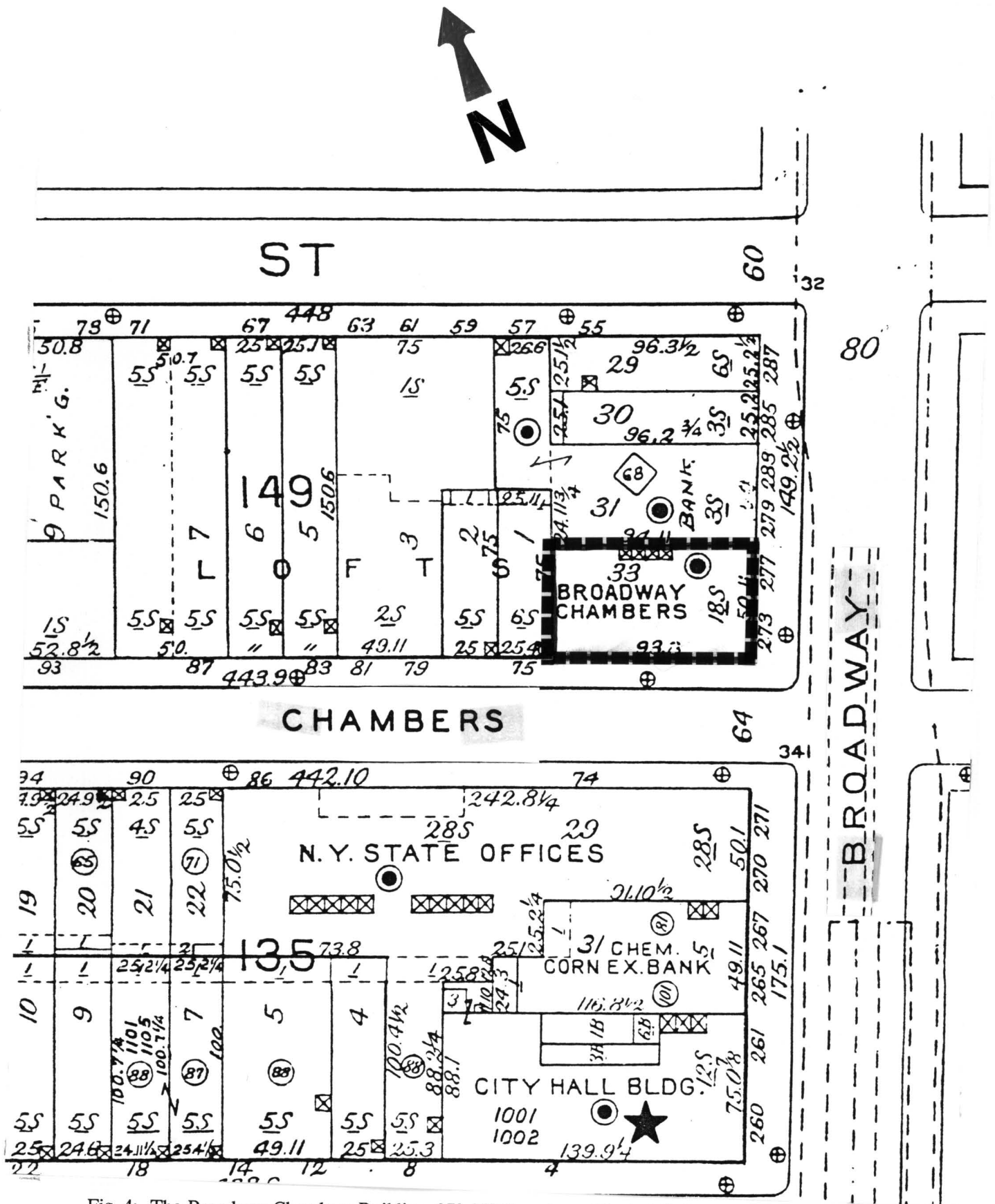


Fig. 4: The Broadway Chambers Building, 273-277 Broadway, Block 149, Lot 33, Landmark Site.
(Graphic Source, Sanborn, *Manhattan Land Book*, 1990-91.)