

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 19, 1981, Designation List 143
LP-2000

EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, 350 Fifth Avenue, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1930-31; Architects Shreve, Lamb & Harmon.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 835, Lot 41.

On September 11, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Empire State Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.14). The hearing was continued to December 11, 1979 (Item No.1). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Six witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Empire State Building is today the best-known symbol of New York City. Its name, its profile, and the view from its summit are familiar the world over, and a visit to New York is generally conceded to be incomplete without a trip to the Empire State Building's observatory.

The Empire State was the final and most celebrated product of the skyscraper frenzy produced by the economic boom of the 1920s, and the most prominent of the modernistic towers that created the midtown skyline in those years. Its completion in April, 1931, on the former site of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, marked the transformation of midtown from New York's preeminent residential area for the social elite into the commercial center of the metropolis.

The engineering and construction of the Empire State Building were perhaps the most awesome accomplishments of its creators. Its design, in many ways shaped by the constraints of time, cost, and structure, was the finest work of architect William Lamb, chief designer for Shreve, Lamb & Harmon. The slender, modernistic silhouette he created fit the building so well that even today, when it is no longer the tallest, it remains one of the handsomest of New York's skyscrapers.

With the decline in construction which accompanied the Depression, and the tendency in the post-war period towards shorter, denser office buildings, the Empire State at 1250 feet remained the world's tallest building until the 1970s, when the Sears Building in Chicago took the title of the world's tallest, and the World Trade Center took the title of New York's tallest. Yet despite the loss of the title which was one of the sources of its original renown, the Empire State Building remains New York's most widely recognized symbol, and the city's quintessential landmark.

The Site: Development of Midtown Manhattan into the commercial center of New York

The site of the Empire State Building was part of a farm, owned by John Thompson, which was acquired in 1827 by William B. Astor.¹ The site remained in Astor hands over a hundred years of development until its purchase, in 1929, by the Empire State Building interests.

Astor was the second son of John Jacob Astor, founder of the Astor dynasty in America. Using the family fortune, he acquired a great deal of undeveloped property in Manhattan, foreseeing that the northward expansion of New York along the island would eventually make his property worth many times its original price. Over the next fifty years, the area around 34th Street and Fifth Avenue developed first into an out-lying rowhouse neighborhood of New York, and then into the city's most fashionable residential area. By the 1850s, Fifth Avenue was lined with the palaces of the Vanderbilts, A.T. Stewart (the "merchant prince," one of New York's wealthiest men), and other millionaires. The Astors themselves moved from Astor Place up to Fifth Avenue in 1859, when John Jacob Astor, Jr., built his house at the northwest corner of Fifth and 33rd Street; shortly thereafter his brother William Backhouse Astor built an adjoining house at the southwest corner of Fifth and 34th Street. The Astor houses soon became known as the central meeting place of New York society, and home to the famous balls thrown by Mrs. Astor for "the four hundred," New York's social elite.²

Following the traditional pattern of Manhattan growth, the city's hotels, theaters, clubs, and restaurants followed the residential development up Fifth Avenue. By the 1890s, guides to the city identified "the great hotel district" as lying "between 23d and 59th Streets, and Fourth and Seventh Avenues.... In that territory, which is little less than two miles long by a half mile wide, are half of the leading hotels of the metropolis."³ In 1890, William Waldorf Astor, son of John Jacob Astor, Jr., having decided to move to London, tore down his house and filed plans for the Waldorf Hotel, a thirteen-story building designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh and completed in 1893. In 1897, the neighboring Astor house having been demolished, the Astoria Hotel was erected by Astor's aunt, and connected to the Waldorf to form the Waldorf-Astoria. The new hotel soon became a major social institution of New York.⁴

Forty years later the area was changing again, largely because of the influx of department stores just before and after World War I. During the final decades of the 19th century New York's fashionable stores had clustered in the area called the "Ladies Mile," along Fifth and Sixth Avenues and Broadway between 11th and 23rd Streets. Altman's started the new trend northward by moving in 1906 from Sixth Avenue and 18th Street to Fifth Avenue at 34th Street. Others followed, and by the early 1920s Fifth Avenue was lined from 34th Street north by stores such as Best's, Tiffany's, Franklin Simon, Bonwit Teller, Lord & Taylor, and Arnold Constable.⁵ Along with the department stores came several tall

office buildings, beginning in 1902 with the Flatiron Building at Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street. Rider's New York City Guide noted that "Hotels and restaurants that have long been landmarks, such as the Manhattan, the Buckingham and Sherry's, have disappeared and tall office buildings are multiplying even on the side streets."⁶ Newspapers picked up on the changes taking place in the area. Capt. William J. Pedrick, executive vice-president of the Fifth Avenue Association, was quoted extensively on the development of Fifth Avenue; he noted in particular the avenue's new tall commercial buildings: the 15-story New York Trust, the 34-story Squibb Building, the 58-story Salmon Tower (500 Fifth Avenue), and the plans for the Empire State Building.⁷

To demonstrate the rate of change on Fifth Avenue, Rider's Guide gave a capsule history of the site across Fifth Avenue from the Waldorf-Astoria: a house belonging to Dr. "Sarsaparilla" Townsend, popularizer of soft drinks, was replaced in 1867 by the "marble palace" of A.T. Stewart; in the 1890s the house was converted for use by the Manhattan Club; in 1901 it was demolished to make way for the four-story Knickerbocker Trust Building, to which, finally, in 1920-21 were added another twelve stories to create the Columbia Trust Building.⁸ The changeover of midtown Manhattan from social to commercial center was finally consummated by the demolition in 1930 of the Waldorf-Astoria itself, and the opening on its site the following year of the Empire State Building, a speculative office building and the tallest in the world.

A New, Modernistic Midtown Skyline and the Skyscraper Race

A new skyline was created for the newly commercial midtown by the progressively larger office buildings being erected during the 1920s. Since the beginnings of skyscraper development in New York in the last decades of the 19th century, architects had tried to adapt historical styles to the modern American invention of the skyscraper. The most successful and famous of these attempts produced the Woolworth Building (Cass Gilbert, 1913), the sixty-story Gothic tower christened the "Cathedral of Commerce." Towards the end of the 1920s, however, under the influence of a "modernism" derived in part from the European Art Deco, New York architects created a new "skyscraper style" which, it has been argued, more fully expressed the nature--the verticality, the metal structure, the sense of an industrial and technological future--of the skyscraper. The series of skyscrapers constructed in midtown, including the Chrysler, Daily News, McGraw-Hill, Chanin, RCA (now GE), Fuller, and Empire State buildings, helped introduce the new modernistic Art Deco style to urban America, and defined midtown's characteristic look for the next several decades, until the new round of skyscraper buildings began in the 1960s.⁹

At the same time, the builders of skyscrapers began to reach for progressively greater heights. The Woolworth Building's sixty stories

had rested unchallenged for a decade, and its observatory was considered to have the finest view of New York. In the late 1920s, however, the new commercial buildings began to challenge the title. A 110-story building announced in 1926 by developer John Larkin was never built,¹⁰ but in 1929 two towers, the Bank of Manhattan (927 ft, 70 stories) downtown on Wall Street, and the Chrysler Building (1,050 ft, 77 stories) in midtown on East 42nd Street, competed in a race to see which would be the new tallest building in the world. The race was heightened by the rivalry between the architects of the two buildings, H. Craig Severance and William Van Alen, who had formerly been partners.¹¹ Chrysler won by arranging to have the building's spire secretly constructed inside the building and then jacked up through the top at the last minute. Shortly thereafter, however, the Chrysler Building lost its title to the Empire State Building.

The Empire State Building was a speculative office building planned by John J. Raskob, who hired former New York State Governor Al Smith to be president of the Empire State Company. As an executive of General Motors, Raskob no doubt considered himself a rival in many ways of Walter Chrysler. According to rental manager Hamilton Weber, the originally planned 86 stories of the Empire State Building were only four feet higher than the Chrysler Building, and "Raskob was worried that Walter Chrysler would pull a trick--like hiding a rod in the spire and then sticking it up at the last minute." Hence, according to Weber, the idea for the 14-story dirigible mast which raised the building's height to 1250 feet but proved, in the end, to be unusable for its intended purpose.¹² The Chrysler and Woolworth buildings, seeing there could be no hope of competition with the Empire State, eventually closed their own observatories.

The 1920s procession of skyscrapers might have continued producing ever taller buildings: according to a Herald Tribune article discussing the Empire State project in 1930, "Charles F. Noyes let it be known some time ago that he was considering erecting 150 floors over two square blocks in the old mercantile district downtown."¹³ The Depression put an end to any such plans, however, and the Empire State Building remained the tallest by far of the city's commercial towers.

John Jacob Raskob and Al Smith.

The man who conceived the idea for the world's tallest speculative office building was a self-made multi-millionaire industrialist named John J. Raskob.¹⁴ Born into a poor family in Lockport, New York, Raskob went to work early in life to support his widowed mother and family. He found work as a secretary for a small street railway company in Lorain, Ohio, that happened to be owned by Pierre Du Pont, of the Du Pont chemical industry family. When Du Pont bought the Dallas Street Railway Company in Texas, he made Raskob treasurer, and eventually he took Raskob with him to Wilmington, Delaware, where Du Pont became president of E. I. Du Pont de Nemours and Raskob became vice president in charge of finance.

Early in the century, Raskob invested heavily in the newly formed General Motors Corporation, and convinced Du Pont to do the same. In 1915, Du Pont became chairman of General Motors, and in 1918 Raskob became chairman of its Finance Committee. The spectacular growth of the value of General Motors stock made Raskob a multi-millionaire, and one of the wealthiest men in the country. Shortly before the Depression Raskob co-authored an article in the Ladies' Home Journal entitled "Everybody Ought to be Rich."¹⁵ Aside from his organizational abilities, Raskob's chief contribution to General Motors was the invention of the installment plan for buying automobiles.

Like many businessmen of the time, Raskob was interested in politics, and like most millionaires he was a Republican. His entry into politics, however, was as a contributor to the gubernatorial campaign of populist Democratic governor Al Smith. Raskob was introduced to Smith in New York City in 1926.¹⁶ The two men came from similar backgrounds--poor Irish Catholic families--and shared a dislike of the Prohibition amendment, an issue in Smith's later campaign for the presidency. They became friendly, and Raskob volunteered generous contributions to Smith's 1926 gubernatorial re-election campaign. Although many of Smith's closest aides distrusted Raskob, they were unable to prevent his appointment two years later as campaign manager for Smith's unsuccessful 1928 race with Hoover for the Presidency, an appointment which resulted in the anomaly of a conservative Republic millionaire becoming Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. (One of Raskob's first actions as Chairman was to move the committee to offices in the General Motors Building on West 57th Street.)

Although Raskob was blamed by some Smith aides for the loss of the 1928 election, and by others for Smith's gradual shift towards a more conservative political philosophy, the relationship between the two men remained strong. When Raskob decided to get into the real estate business, and to build the tallest building in the world, he offered Smith the \$50,000 a year job of President of the Empire State Corporation.

Al Smith and the World's Tallest Building: Public Relations at the Highest Levels.

Raskob's rationale for building the world's tallest building, and for making Governor Smith its president, was never clearly stated, although several explanations have been offered. Unlike its immediate predecessors--the Woolworth Building for Frank W. Woolworth and his company, the Manhattan Company Building for the Bank of Manhattan, and the Chrysler Building for Walter Chrysler and his company--the Empire State was not built to symbolize one man or company: it was not the General Motors Building or Raskob Tower, for instance. The Empire State Building was instead simply a speculative office building, and it was named for New York State, home of the building and the state of which Al Smith had been four times governor. Rather than being a corporate symbol, the building became identified as the world's tallest building and a venture of Al Smith's.

The explanation of its height offered by the company in its various promotional brochures was simply that of a human adventure, carrying on "the Pharaoh's dream":

Down through the ages, men have yearned and toiled and planned, that they might build a structure nearer to the skies than ever had been built before. Something of this great desire burned in the souls of the Pharaohs of Egypt, when the Great Pyramid of Gizeh was erected, 451 feet high, equal to thirty-four stories. St. Peter's, at Rome, lifts its dome 435 feet toward the sky. That slender and marvelous minaret in Cairo spears the heights at 280 feet and the Cremona Campanile in Italy rises 396 feet above the earth. The famous Cathedral of Cologne attains an altitude of 512 feet; the Washington Monument is 555 feet high. Then came the era of steel, heralded by the world-famous Eiffel Tower in Paris, 984 feet high, useless except as an awe-inspiring demonstration of what men, steel and machinery can accomplish. The Woolworth Tower was for long the world's tallest building, rising in beautiful Gothic design to a height of sixty stories, 792 feet. The Bank of Manhattan at last surpassed it with its height of 838 feet, only to be in turn surpassed by the 1046 foot elevation of the Chrysler Building's topmost spire. But Empire State is higher than all these. It carries to triumphant completion the vaulting ambition of the Pharaohs, of Pope Julius when he began the building of St. Peter's.¹⁷

As for bringing ex-Governor Smith into the project, Raskob apparently suggested at the time that he was going to build the Empire State Building to give his old friend a job. Smith, having lost the presidential election and retired from the governorship of New York, faced an uncertain future. His friend, actor and producer Eddie Dowling, recalled being present at the moment of Raskob's offer, the occasion being a dinner thrown by the New York State Democratic party for newly elected Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt. Smith and Dowling had gone to the men's lounge during a lull in the proceedings, and Smith was telling him of his worries, when Raskob appeared and announced, "Don't worry, Al, I'm going to build a new skyscraper--biggest in the world--and you're going to be president of the company," maintaining that he was doing it all to give Smith a high-paying job.¹⁸

The key to understanding the actual motives behind the height of the building and the involvement of Governor Smith seems to involve a newly developing science that was becoming more and more important to the art of architecture: advertising.

Advertising seems to have become an accepted function of office buildings in the 1920s. Arthur Tappan North, writing on the subject, noted:

The incorporation of publicity or advertising features in a building is frequently an item for consideration.... This feature, when possessing intrinsic merit, is consonant with and is a legitimate attribute of good architecture. It stimulates public interest and admiration, is accepted as a genuine contribution to architecture, enhances the value of the property and is profitable to the owner in the same manner as are others forms of legitimate advertising.¹⁹

The Empire State Company in fact launched an extensive advertising campaign capitalizing on several features of the building: its "historic site," formerly that of the Astor Mansion and the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel; its convenience of the two rail terminals in midtown; "a board of directors that inspires confidence;" and its advertising campaign, run by the public relations firm of Belle Moscovitz, former political aide to Al Smith, hit all the leading New York newspapers week after week with very clever ads.²⁰

The value of advertising for the Empire State Building was picked up by the Real Estate Magazine, in an article entitled "Good Publicity Something More Than 'Hitting' Front Page," in which the Empire State Building was singled out as an excellent example of how it should be done:

The Empire State Building has received extensive newspaper attention because of former Governor Smith's connection with the enterprise and through a number of clever creative publicity stunts, notable the mast which will top the building as a mooring spot for Zeppelins duly authorized by official Washington with reporters and cameramen obligingly on hand.²¹

The two primary subjects of the advertising, however, the two attributes most closely identified with the building, were the involvement of Al Smith, and the building's unmatched height.

Al Smith's relationship to the enterprise was frankly stated in the booklet released on May 1, 1931, for the building's opening ceremonies:

/Raskob and his associates/ selected a leader, a man so well known to the public that his very presence placed the seal of integrity upon their undertaking. He was Alfred E. Smith, four times Governor of New York State, Presidential candidate of the Democratic Party....known and beloved by his countrymen. He became president of Empire State, Inc. even while the mighty structure was only a dream.²²

Lists of the building's board of directors invariably began with Alfred E. Smith, and ended humbly with John J. Raskob. A New Yorker article of early

1931 noted that the building was "inevitably associated with ex-Governor Al Smith. In its earlier stages his picturesque statements made excellent publicity and drew all New York's attention to the steelwork as it grew to dizzy heights."²³

Smith's biographers have noted that his functions at the building were "largely ceremonial.... The staff handled all the rental and maintenance problems, while Smith served as attention getter, greeter, and publicity man delux."²⁴ To the public, however, the building was Al Smith's, and from the opening ceremonies, when his grandchildren, as representatives of "posterity," cut the ribbon at the main entrance, through the following years of giving tour upon tour to visiting royalty, politicians, sports heroes, and celebrities of every kind, he remained the building's symbol.²⁵

Similarly, the building's height played a major role in the company's public relations campaign. Besides constantly comparing the building's height to other tall monuments, the company emphasized the extraordinary daring of the construction workers involved in erecting the world's tallest building by commissioning photographer Lewis Hine to document the work. The Company arranged for a special mechanical cage that would enable Hine to be swung out into the air to photograph the most difficult feats. The photographs were then used in advertisements, and put on display in the ground floor store windows.

The publicity value of tall buildings was apparently considered to be great enough that it could actually be figured in as a legitimate "expenditure," designed to bring increased prestige and, presumably, income. R.H. Shreve, one of the Empire State Building's architects, wrote in 1930 that the constraints of zoning, wind-bracing, and general costs of a very tall building determine a point...

...where the balance begins to swing back and the rate of return on capital investment begins to diminish as the building goes higher, unless the owner gets a markedly greater unit return for the higher space, or charges the decrease in the direct net return to "advertising."²⁶

Justification for this approach was probably found in the tremendous public interest which developed during the late twenties in skyscraper heights. The New York Sun published a list of the fifty tallest buildings in New York, arranged by height, and shortly afterwards the architectural journal Pencil Points found it necessary to reprint it, in January 1931, noting that "interest in the heights of New York skyscrapers does not seem to abate, if we may judge by the inquiries concerning them received in this office."²⁷ A cartoon in the same issue showed an architect with a rendering of a pointed skyscraper and a caption reading: "Enthusiastic Architect: 'You See, This Spike Runs Down the Entire Length of the Building and If Anyone Builds a Taller Building We Can Jack Up the Spike and Still Be the Tallest!'"²⁸

In short, Raskob's strategy was based on an aggressive advertising campaign to market the Empire State Building, a speculative real-estate venture, as the world's tallest building, headed by the world's most popular former politician, with the world's most competent board of directors, on the world's most prestigious site, and the world's most

daring engineering feat, with Al Smith personally conducting the world's famous to see the world's most overwhelming view.

If advertising was indeed the goal of the builders of the Empire State Building, they were extraordinarily successful. Twenty years later, Collier's described the effect of the building on the publicity-minded:

Douglas Leigh, who makes those superspectacular signs for Broadway, is itching to transform the top into a giant soft-drink bottle, or a glowing cigarette. Human flies want to walk up the front, flagpole sitters want to sit on the lightning rod, and high-wire artists want to tralpe through space over to the Chrysler tower at Forty-second Street.²⁹

The effort spent on public relations paid off much sooner than the building's promoters imagined. Two weeks after the project was announced the stock market crashed, and throughout the early years of the Depression the building remained seriously undertenanted. The Empire State Building was saved from bankruptcy, in part, by the million or so visitors to the observation decks each year who paid one dollar a piece admissions.³⁰

Shreve, Lamb & Harmon

John J. Raskob was no doubt attracted to Shreve, Lamb & Harmon by their business-like approach to architecture. Raskob first encountered Shreve & Lamb in 1926 when his company, General Motors, commissioned a new headquarters on West 57th Street from the firm. He must have been impressed by their performance; he may also have considered it an advantage that Shreve, Lamb & Harmon had been called in as consulting architects for the Bank of Manhattan Building, and therefore had some experience in races for the "tallest building" title, as well as experience working with the Starrett & Eken construction company which built the Bank of Manhattan and which was later awarded the Empire State contract.³¹

Richmond Harold Shreve (1877-1946) was born in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, son of a former Dean of Quebec Cathedral. He studied architecture at Cornell University, graduated in 1902, and spent the next four years on the faculty of the College of Architecture there. While at Cornell he supervised construction of Goldwin Smith Hall, designed by the prominent New York firm of Carrere & Hastings, and at the conclusion of the work he joined the firm.³² William Frederick Lamb (1883-1952), son of New York builder William Lamb, was born in Brooklyn. After graduating from Williams College in 1904, he studied at the Columbia University School of Architecture, and then went to Paris to study at the Atelier Deglane. Having received his diploma from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1911, he returned to New York and joined Carrere & Hastings.³³ In 1920, both Shreve and Lamb became partners in the new firm of Carrere & Hastings, Shreve & Lamb. Four years later they broke away to form Shreve & Lamb, and in 1929 they were joined by Arthur Loomis Harmon (1878-1958) to form Shreve, Lamb & Harmon.³⁴ Harmon, born in Chicago, had studied at the Art Institute there, and graduated from the Columbia University School of Architecture in 1901. From 1902 to 1911 he was a designer in

the office of McKim, Mead & White, in 1912-13 an associate of the firm of Wallis & Goodwillie, and then practiced under his own name until joining Shreve & Lamb. His work alone included battle monuments at Tours, Cantigny and Somme-Py in France, a YMCA in Jerusalem, and the award-winning Shelton Hotel in New York.³⁵

Of the three architects in the firm, Lamb was generally acknowledged to be the designer, and Shreve the administrator. Shreve was also active as a planner outside the firm's work; he was the director of the Slum Clearance Committee of New York after its formation in 1933, and chief architect of the group preparing plans for the Williamsburg Housing Project, as well as chief architect of the Vladeck Houses on the Lower East Side and also of Parkchester in the Bronx.³⁶

Shreve, Lamb & Harmon worked principally on commercial office buildings, although they also designed a number of estates and residences in the New York suburbs, and a few apartment houses in Manhattan. Their residential work largely in the neo-Tudor and other popular styles of the 1920s, while their commercial work tended to be spare and functional, reflecting little of the Beaux-Arts ornament for which Carrere & Hastings had been famous. Their buildings in New York, including 500 Fifth Avenue, 14 Wall Street, the Lefcourt National Building, and the Mutual of New York Building, and also their commissions outside the city, such as the Standard Oil Building in Albany, the Reynolds Tobacco Company building in Winston-Salem, and the Chimes Building in Syracuse, are all similarly designed with unadorned limestone cladding, metal framed windows, and simple set-back massing, occasionally with Art Deco or Streamlined ornamental motifs.³⁷

The sparseness and economy of the firm's designs were a reflection of several architectural notions gaining currency in the 1920s. As office buildings grew larger and their engineering and financing more complex, the nature of architecture had to adapt to new conditions. Many architects in the 1920s and 1930s, recognizing new constraints, adapted the language of the International Style and functionalist schools of thought and wrote about a new art of architecture.

All three architects in the firm wrote on the subject of the changing nature of architecture. Harmon listed the various forces at work on design as: steel construction, congested business areas, the need for light and air, property shape, internal lighting, zoning, the ratio of rentable area to overall area, the cost of steel, wind bracing, and elevators.³⁸ William Lamb, the partner concerned least with organization and most with design, concurred:

An interesting development in the planning of present day office buildings is the change in the conception that the architect has of his work. The day that he could sit before his drawing board and make pretty sketches of decidedly uneconomic monuments to himself has gone. His scorn of things "practical" has been replaced by an intense earnestness to make practical necessities the armature upon which he moulds the form of his idea. Instead of being the intolerant

aesthete, he is one of a group of experts upon whom he depends for the success of his work, for the modern large building with its complicated machinery is beyond the capacity of any one man to master, and yet he must, in order to control the disposition and arrangement of this machine, have a fairly accurate general knowledge of what it is all about. Added to this he must know how to plan his building so that it will "work" economically and produce the revenue for which his clients have made their investment.³⁹

Lamb's design inclinations corresponded very well to the kind of work that Shreve brought into the office. Mrs. Lamb recalls that his tastes in most matters tended to the simple and classical. The architecture he loved best was the spare Romanesque of the southern French cathedrals. Among his contemporaries he greatly admired Raymond Hood, particularly his spare, vertical Daily News Building; Hood also wrote about the practical side of architecture, dismissing fantastic design as unnecessary. The two men were close friends. Although Lamb's work had much of the Modernistic to it, his opinion of the flamboyant variety of Moderne represented by the Chrysler Building was rather low--he referred to it once as the "Little Nemo school of architecture," meaning fancy and fantastic, like the comic strip. He never considered his work to be in any way describable as "Art Deco."⁴⁰

Precisely because the firm was a well-organized producer of practical and unadorned office buildings, it was able to organize the myriad elements involved and produce a striking, handsome, but still economical design for the Empire State Building, which was above all a creation of business considerations and an unrivalled engineering feat.

Conception and Design

According to the architects, the Empire State Building was largely shaped by the various economic and engineering considerations involved.

The program was short enough--a fixed budget, no space more than 28 feet from window to corridor, as many stories of such space as possible, an exterior of limestone, and completion by May 1, 1931, which meant a year and six months from the beginning of sketches. The first three of these requirements produced the mass of the building and the latter two the characteristics of its design.⁴¹

Planning of the building's layout--involving the placement of elevators, utilities, ventilation, and pipe shafts in such a way as to obtain the maximum amount of rentable office space--centered on a prototypical plan for the 30th floor, at which point the tower legally began to rise with a zoning-mandated floor-area of one-quarter the lot size.⁴²

The principles, established by these cooperative investigations, which covered a period of four weeks, together with the owner's requirements...formed the complete program. The "parti" was arrived at in two hours, the evening before a meeting of the owner's corporation. An all-night "charette" produced the next day a series of five or six of the essential plans, an elevation, a perspective, and a fairly accurate tabulation of rentable areas and cube.⁴³

Lamb described the plan arrived at through the various consultations:

The logic of the plan is very simple. A certain amount of space in the center, arranged as compactly as possible, contains the vertical circulation, toilets, shafts and corridors. Surrounding this is a perimeter of office space 28 feet deep. The sizes of the floors diminish as the elevators decrease in number. In essence there is a pyramid of non-rentable space surrounded by a greater pyramid of rentable space....⁴⁴

The massing of the building was to a great extent affected by the elevator system. The elevators were placed in four banks parallel to the building's main axis, with those on the east and west sides being the low-rise group. The low-rise elevators drop off as the building rises, enabling the tower to step back...

...from the long dimension of the property to approach the square form of the shaft, with the result that instead of being a tower, set upon a series of diminishing setbacks prescribed by the zoning law, the building becomes all tower rising from a great five-story base.⁴⁵

Elevators and budget were said to be the determining factors of the building's height. The elevator contractor, and Starrett Brothers and Eken, asked independently to calculate the height limit of the building based on their economic priorities, each arrived at a limit of eighty stories plus five for the executive offices.⁴⁶

Floor-plan, massing, and height arrived at, the architects turned to the building's exterior. The spare design, based on massing and vertical window strips, was a product of both the building program's practical needs, and Lamb's aesthetic preferences.

The exterior is defined almost entirely by a system of vertical strips of windows, projecting slightly beyond the limestone walls, set in continuous vertical metal surrounds, and separated by dull aluminum spandrels; these strips are arranged singly, in pairs, and in sets of three, and run continuously from bottom to top. There is almost no ornamental detail, other than modernistic ripples in the aluminum spandrels and modernistic caps where the window strips terminate at building setbacks.

The practical source of the window system was "the last and perhaps the most important item in the owner's program--speed of construction."⁴⁷ Completion of the building by May 1st was required because that was the traditional day for the signing of new commercial leases in the city, and therefore of crucial importance in the economic planning of a speculative office building. With such a complex building program, construction had to proceed smoothly and as quickly as possible. The advantages of the system were outlined by Shreve in a special article:

The stonework is at once simplified and its cost very much reduced. Setting the windows forward eliminates the finishing of stone jambs and heads and the arrises /edges/ at their intersection with the face of the stone. Much of the stonework becomes largely of such a nature that it can be handled as ashlar.... Because of the use of metal spandrels in the place of masonry spandrels the piers of face stone carry up vertically for great heights...without cross bonding with other masonry. There are therefore numerous pieces of stone quite alike and of simple form...easily and quickly fabricated. Because of the simplicity of the stonework...it is anticipated that there will be a minimum of cutting and fitting stone at the site.... Special study was given to eliminate as far as possible material interdependence....the spandrels and the trims were designed to be fastened in place independently, without any structural connection between the two.... The stonework could proceed at any time after the setting of the metal trims quite without regard to the windows and spandrels.... The effect...has been of the utmost importance in shortening the time usually required between the completion of preliminary sketches and the beginning of construction at the site.⁴⁸

The aesthetic idea behind the window arrangement was also stated by Shreve:

In all the building there are somewhat more than 6400 windows; over 4000 of them are in the tower walls. What treatment of these myriad openings in this vast expanse of wall would best retain and express solidity of mass, avoid giving the impression of a perforated shell, add dignity to utility, and through all escape the inherently monotonous gridiron of oft-repeated floors crisscrossed by the slotted vertical bands of uniformly spaced windows? ...It was decided to place the glass of the windows outside the face of the wall, and so to eliminate the customary reveals of soffits and jambs,--and their attendant assertive shadows.⁴⁹

The total effect of the massing, height, and window-spandrel-wall design is of a very tall tower, rising from a five-story base, and topped by a modernistic spire. The window strips break up the mass of the building, and emphasize its verticality, while the elimination of reveals creates effectively a smooth glass, metal, and stone skin. The expression

of the building's tallness is simple and elegant, the epitome of the kind of design most admired by William Lamb.

On the question of the building's style, Lamb wrote:

Whatever "style" it may be is the result of a logical and simple answer to the problems set by the economic and technical demands of its unprecedented program.⁵⁰

He never thought of it as Art Deco. Much of the ornament can only be described as "modernistic," especially the glass and steel dirigible mooring mast, and in that sense would fall under the generic term "Art Deco" or "Moderne," but the design of the building has little in common with that of the flamboyant Chrysler Building, almost its contemporary and the generally accepted prototypical Art Deco skyscraper. In its reliance on stacked massing, vertical window strips, and simplicity of materials, and in the public insistence by its architects that these elements were largely determined by sheer practical necessity, the Empire State Building seems closer to Raymond Hood's Daily News Building, also contemporary with it. It is quite possible that Lamb discussed his work with his close friend Hood; he admired his work, and the Daily News was Hood's most recent success at the time. The Daily News Building is also not a purely Art Deco creation, but in some respects an International Style slab; similarly, Hood's contemporary McGraw-Hill Building combines aspects of both. If the Empire State Building, a spare tower on a base with some modernistic details, belongs in a line of succession, it might be that of the News and McGraw-Hill Buildings, followed by the RCA tower in Rockefeller Center, of which Hood was a chief designer.⁵¹

By contrast with the News Building, however, the Empire State is thoroughly symmetrical, and not treated with bright colors. Unlike many skyscrapers, it does not present an overwhelming mass: in midtown, pedestrians are conscious only of its five-story base, which blends into the scale of the area, while from a distance it presents a slender silhouette, rising from the center of the metropolis, which is visible and recognizable from almost every point in the city and some beyond. In this sense, the Empire State Building is in its own class, and its design reflects what it, uniquely, is.

Description

Although the 1250-foot high Empire State Building is often described as 102 stories tall, that is not quite accurate. The major portion of the building is comprised of 80 stories of commercial office space, with five stories above that for the building's executive offices, and the observatory at the 86th floor. The enormous metal "mooring mast" above the building contains only an elevator encircled by a staircase, and no floors per se; its height, however, is considered by the Empire State Building management to be the equivalent of 14 stories; these, added to the 86 offices floors and two basement levels, produce the figure of 102 stories.⁵²

The building's tower sits on a five-story base, with facades at the lot line on West 33rd Street, Fifth Avenue, and West 34th Street. The base is a monumental modernistic version of a classical scheme: basement, colonnade, and attic. The basement is formed by the first floor shops and entrances; the colonnade is approximated by a giant order of molded stone piers flanking vertical window strips; and the attic consists of small windows alternating with molded stone panels.

The Fifth Avenue facade centers on the building's main entrance which consists of a central pair of doors flanked on either side by a revolving door; a three-story high, three-bay wide set of windows set in modernistically-designed patterns; and an attic story of a pair of windows, all set off from the rest of the facade by two giant molded-stone piers topped by stylized stone eagles above which are inscribed the words EMPIRE STATE. The rest of the facade is comprised of monumental bays, three on either side. Each bay consists of a storefront of chrome-metal and glass at the first floor level, two three-story vertical window strips separated by a narrow stone mullion and flanked by a wide stone pier with a modernistic top in place of a capital, and two windows at the fifth-floor level separated by a narrow squat molded-stone mullion and flanked by wide squat stone piers. These three bays are set off from the central-entrance bay by a half-bay comprising one vertical strip of windows, and end at either corner with a half-bay set between two monumental stone piers.

The identical 33rd and 34th Street facades each comprise three sections of monumental bays, similar to those on the Fifth Avenue facade, separated by two entrance bays. The three sections consist of six, seven, and six bays, slightly emphasising the central section. The two entrance bays on either facade, which project slightly outward, are less elaborate versions of the main Fifth Avenue entrance bay: doors at the first floor level, three vertical window strips, and a three-window attic story, all enframed by a wide stone surround. The two West 33rd Street entrances, however, are actually recessed; these entrances have sets of side doors perpendicular to the building front, and front revolving doors; a moderne light fixture hangs in the center of the recess; the doors are aluminum, set in marble walls.

Streamlined metal marquee-type canopies with curving corners project over the entrances on West 33rd and West 34th Streets; each is ringed by three sets of continuous horizontal metal bands. The original storefronts are almost entirely glass-fronted. Each has a black-granite base, a cornice of horizontal molded-aluminum bands framing a black-granite panel, and a central recessed entrance, and each is separated from the next by narrow molded aluminum mullions topped by modernistic finials. The storefronts form a glass wall which projects three feet beyond the five-story base and forms a banding around it; the continuous black-granite cornices are at the same level as the metal canopies over the 33rd and 34th Street entrances and form a black band course at that level. Several of the storefronts have been unsympathetically altered.

The design scheme above the five-story base is determined simply by massing and fenestration. On both the eastern, Fifth Avenue, facade and the western, rear, facade, the tower is dramatically set back above its base, and rises, with shallow setbacks at the 21st and 25th floors, to the 30th floor; from there it rises unobstructed to a shallow setback at the 72nd floor, then to the 81st floor setback, somewhat more pronounced, which marks the top of the commercial office portion of the building--with corresponding elevator banks--and the beginning of the five-story executive suite; a final setback at the 85th floor marks the observatory. Above the tower rises the metal-faced dirigible mooring mast, topped by an enormous television broadcasting antenna.

The tower on the east and west facades is nine bays wide from the sixth to the 25th floor, seven bays wide to the 72nd floor, six bays wide to the 81st floor, and five bays wide to the mooring mast. The north (34th Street) and south (33rd Street) facades, wider than the east and west facades, are fifteen bays wide from the sixth to the 21st floor, eleven bays wide to the 30th floor, and nine bays wide to the mooring mast; the nine bays from the 30th floor up are divided into three sections of three bays each: a central section enframed by two projecting side sections; the central section rises unbroken to the 85th floor, while the flanking projecting sections rise to a shallow setback at the 72nd floor and another at the 81st. The various setbacks produce a symmetrical massing that emphasizes the verticality of the building, and creates at the lower levels the effect of a tower rising from a layer of surrounding tapered masses.

A fenestration pattern of long vertical window strips is used to break up the mass of the building and emphasize its verticality. Each window in the vertical strips protrudes slightly from the Indiana-limestone cladding of the tower, and is enframed by a strip of nickel-chrome-steel; each window is separated from the one above by a dull aluminum spandrel with modernistic molding. Where the vertical window strips rise to a setback, they end in simple modernistic metal caps, and begin again above the setback. The three central window strips on the north and south sides end at the 85th-floor level in much larger and more elaborate modernistic metal plates. The strips on most of the building are arranged in pairs, each level comprising two adjacent windows separated by a nickel-chrome-steel mullion and enframed by nickel-chrome-steel surrounds, each window having an accompanying dull aluminum spandrel; several bays however comprise triple window strips, while others comprise single window strips. The alternation between paired, triple, and single strips is used to create a horizontal rhythm of vertical lines accentuating the center of each facade.

On the east and west facades, all windows are arranged in paired vertical strips, with these exceptions: the outer bay on either side from the sixth to the 25th floor, and the outer four bays on either side from the 21st to the 25th floor, consist of single vertical window strips; the outer bay on either side from the 72nd to the 81st floor likewise consists

of a single vertical window strip, and also the outer two bays from the 81st to the 84th floors. The arrangement on the wider north and south fronts is more complicated. The outer two bays, on either side, which rise from the sixth to the 21st floor, are paired vertical window strips. The next five bays on either side, rising from the sixth floor to a shallow setback at the 25th, and projecting out past the central section, are symmetrically arranged with a central paired-window strip bay in the center flanked on either side by two single window strips; these bays above the 25th floor setback to the 30th floor are rearranged as two paired vertical strips and a triple strip. The central five bays, from the sixth to the 30th floors, are paired vertical window strips. Above the 30th floor, where these facades are divided into two projecting sections flanking a central section, the latter comprises three paired window strips, while the former are symmetrically arranged as a triple-window strip flanked on either side by a paired window strip.

Rising above the 86-story office building is the aluminum, chrome-nickel-steel and glass mast, originally designed to be used for mooring dirigibles but now serving only as a support for the upper observatory tower, and housing for display lights. Four progressively smaller rectangular levels form a base from which springs a cylindrical shaft rising to a conical top. The sides of the levels forming the base are ringed by continuous horizontal metal banding. At each of the four corners of the cylindrical shaft, rising to half its height, is a set of three overlapping metal wings from which the shaft appears to grow; the four sides of the shaft are formed by continuous glass walls. The top is in three sections: a cylindrical enclosed observation level, still used, of the same circumference as the shaft; a second, smaller cylindrical level surrounded by an open-air observation area, no longer in use, originally intended as a landing platform for dirigible passengers; and a top section in the shape of a truncated cone--pierced by eight circular openings--which houses the mooring mechanism and beacon lights, and which is topped by a metal mooring pole; each of these three sections is ringed by continuous tubular metal bands. The mooring mast is now the base for a 200-foot high television antenna, added in 1953, which completes the silhouette of the building as it has been known since that year.

Empire State Building: Symbol of New York

Following the uncertain first years of the Depression, during which the half-tenanted building was nicknamed "Smith's Folly," or the "Empty State Building," the Empire State became a successful commercial office building. The continuing northward trend of midtown took the prime corporate tenants whom Raskob had hoped to attract away to office buildings north of 42nd Street; the tenancy of the building therefore has since been largely drawn from the surrounding garment district. Among others housed in the building are the notions, shoe, shirt and hosiery industries, as well as many international corporations and banks.⁵³

The Empire State Building, however went beyond the aspirations of

Raskob for a prestigious and profitable commercial office building. The success of the observatory in drawing crowds of tourists, and the guided tours by Governor Smith for all visiting celebrities, started a process which helped make the building famous the world over. March 1940 saw the building's four-millionth visitor (actor Jimmy Stewart), and May 1971 its forty-millionth.⁵⁴

The Empire State Building's place as symbol of New York derives perhaps equally from its function as a place to visit, from where the most spectacular view of New York can be had, and its function as a centrally located landmark, whose slender, pointed silhouette can be seen literally from miles around, marking out midtown Manhattan, the center of the metropolis. The famous silhouette has been reproduced in countless images, and small statues of the building have been spotted in Far-Eastern bazaars⁵⁵ as well as in Times Square tourist shops. The building has figured in television and movies--most famous of these being King Kong--as a symbol of the summit of New York, the greatest creation of a great city.

In the 1970s, when the building lost its title as world's tallest, the office of Shreve, Lamb & Harmon announced a plan to remove the mooring mast above the 86th floor observatory and replace it with twenty stories of office space, to reestablish the building's position as world's greatest skyscraper. The plan--apparently more a public relations ploy than a serious proposal⁵⁶--was quickly forgotten, and indeed would have been counter-productive, as it would have destroyed the silhouette by which the building is known.

Despite the loss of its "world's tallest" title, in fact, the Empire State Building has lost none of its original distinction or renown. Its design, its history, and perhaps also its position in the center of the city, have all helped it retain its symbolic significance. On the occasion of its 50th anniversary--May 1, 1981--a special proclamation was issued by the Mayor of New York, declaring the week of May 1-8, 1981, to be "Empire State Building Week."

The Empire State Building remains New York's preeminent landmark.

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FOOTNOTES

1. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds. Liber 220 Page 327.
2. Theodore James, Jr., The Empire State Building (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp 22-26.
3. Moses King, King's Handbook of New York City (Boston: Moses King, 1892), pp 199-200.
4. Theodore James, Jr., Fifth Avenue (New York: Walker and Company, 1971), recounts that W.W. Astor had social aspirations for his wife, was jealous for her of his aunt's social position, and replaced his house with a hotel to spite his aunt. P.171.
5. Fremont Rider, Rider's New York City (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1923), pp.250-1
6. Ibid., p.242.
7. These clippings, and a great many others relating to the public relations activities of the Empire State Building Company, are now stored in the archives of the Avery Library at Columbia University, in a set of scrap-books labeled "Empire State Building." Pedrick was quoted in the Evening Post, the Evening Telegram, and the Herald Tribune, on Sept. 27, 1930. Another interesting article is "Solid DeLuxe Fills All Fifth Ave. Area," in the World, Sept. 28, 1930.
8. Rider, p.250.
9. For a detailed account of the development of Art Deco skyscrapers, see Cervin Robinson and Rosemary Haag Bletter, Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).
10. This was planned for the site of the McGraw-Hill Building, 330 West 42nd Street. See "McGraw-Hill Gets Big Building Site," New York Times, May 30, 1930, p.34.
11. Landmarks Preservation Commission, Chrysler Building (LP-0992), by Marjorie Pearson (New York: City of New York, 1978), pp.2-3.
12. Jonathan Goldman, The Empire State Building Book (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), pp.31-2. Passengers were supposed to descend from the dirigible to an open landing/observatory deck 100 stories above midtown. Despite all the calculations, apparently no one realized that at 1250 feet there would be tremendous updrafts making such a descent rather dangerous. The impracticability of the scheme suggests that the utility of the mast was a consideration secondary to that of increasing the building's height.

13. "Empire State Tower Will have Nickel Facade," Herald Tribune, 1930, in Empire State Building scrapbooks at Avery Library.
14. Biographical details on Raskob are condensed from James J. Walsh, "John J. Raskob," in Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review of Letters, Philosophy & Science (Dublin: The Educational Company of Ireland Ltd.), 17 (1928), 465-70. Other accounts may be found in the various biographies of Al Smith cited below.
15. Ladies Home Journal, August 1929; cited in Matthew and Hannah Josephson, Al Smith: Hero of the Cities (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p.357.
16. Josephson, p.354. Also, Richard O'Connor, The First Hurrah: A biography of Alfred E. Smith (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1970), p.163. See both for further details on Smith and Raskob.
17. Empire State: a history (New York: Empire State Inc., May 1, 1931), p.30 ff. A promotional brochure for opening day.
18. O'Connor, p.227.
19. Arthur Tappan North, Contemporary American Architects: Raymond M. Hood (New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1931) p.11. Critic Douglas Haskell wrote of Raymond Hood's Daily News Building that it was an example of "architecture as an advertising art," Haskell, "The Stripes of the News," The Nation, Dec. 24, 1930, p.713.
20. The vast array of advertisements are collected in the Empire State Building scrapbooks at the Avery Library archives, op cit.
21. Bernard A. Bergman, in Real Estate Magazine, undated clipping in the Empire State Building scrapbooks at Avery Library.
22. Empire State: a history, op. cit., p.13.
23. "The Skyline," in The New Yorker, January 10, 1931, in the Empire State Building scrapbooks at Avery Library.
24. O'Connor, p.292.
25. Smith's interest in the building, apparently, was not great. Frances Perkins, a close aide, wrote in her memoirs that his duties bored him, that it was not a real job, and that "his office was only a place to hang his hat." Josephson, p.414. His involvement proved invaluable, however, during the Depression, when he was able to use his personal prestige to convince President Roosevelt to move several new federal agencies into offices at the Empire State Building, to persuade the City to lower the building's taxes while it was taking huge losses, and to arrange for several banks to lower the building's mortgage rates.

26. R.H. Shreve, "The Economic Design of Office Buildings," in Architectural Record, vol. 67, no. 3 (March 1930), p.359.
27. "Heights of New York Skyscrapers," in Pencil Points, 12 (Jan 1931), p.63.
28. Ibid., p.67.
29. Creighton Peet, "Peak of a Skyline," Collier's, Feb 5, 1949, p.32, 60.
30. James, The Empire State Building, op. cit., p.115.
31. "The Manhattan Company Building, New York City," Architecture and Building, 62 (July 1930), p.193.
32. "Richmond Shreve, Architect, 69, Dies," obituary, New York Times, May 11, 1946, p.7:1.
33. "William F. Lamb, 68, Architect, is Dead," obituary, New York Times, September 9, 1952, p.31:1.
34. Reminiscences by surviving member of the firm suggest a date of 1926; the Shreve obituary says 1924.
35. "Arthur Harmon, Architect, Dead," obituary, New York Times, October 18, 1958, p.21:3.
36. Shreve obituary, op. cit.
37. Descriptions and illustrations of most of these buildings may be found in Shreve, "The Economic Design of Office Buildings," op. cit.
38. Arthur Loomis Harmon, "The Design of Office Buildings," Architectural Forum, 52 (June 1930), p.819.
39. William F. Lamb, "The Empire State Building: VII. The General Design," Architectural Forum, 54 (Jan 1931), p.1.
40. Interview with Mrs. William F. Lamb, May 6, 1981. Notes in the Empire State Building file at the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
41. Lamb, "The General Design," op. cit., p.1.
42. Ibid., p.1.
43. Ibid., p.5.
44. Ibid., p.5.
45. Ibid., p.5.
46. Ibid., p.5.
47. Ibid., p.5.

48. R.H. Shreve, "The Empire State Building: II. The window-spandrel wall detail and its relation to building progress," Architectural Forum, 53 (July 1930), p.99 ff.
49. Ibid., p.99.
50. Lamb, op. cit., p.7.
51. See W. Parker Chase, New York: The Wonder City (New York: Wonder City Publishing Co., Inc., 1932), p.211.
52. When Harmon described the design of the Empire State Building, he noted that "the wall as a series of vertical piers seems to be the most satisfactory solution to date--not because that necessarily expresses the structure more accurately but because in its simplicity and accent of height where height predominates it comes nearer to satisfying the eye. The Daily News Building on 42nd Street by Howells and Hood is an excellent illustration." Arthur Loomis Harmon, "The Design of Office Buildings," op. cit., p.820. It is also interesting that Hood's first conception for the Daily News Building, rejected by the publisher, was a tower rising from a three-story base, the scheme realized in the Empire State Building. Walter H. Kilham, Jr., Raymond Hood, Architect (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1973), p.22.
53. James, The Empire State Building, op. cit., p.167 ff.
54. Ibid., p.169.
55. Goldman, op. cit., p.9.
56. According to William Plyer, currently a partner in Shreve, Lamb & Harmon Associates P.C.

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 Empire State 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 Empire State Building is today the best-known symbol of New York City; that its name, its profile, and the view from its summit are familiar the world over; that it was the final and most celebrated product of the skyscraper frenzy produced by the economic boom of the 1920s, and the most prominent of the modernistic towers that created the midtown skyline in those years; that its completion in April 1931, on the former site of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, marked the final transformation of midtown from New York's preeminent residential area for the social elite into the commercial center of the metropolis; that its engineering and construction were awesome accomplishments; that its design, while in many ways shaped by the constraints of time, cost and structure, was the finest work of architect William Lamb, chief designer for Shreve, Lamb & Harmon; that its slender, modernistic silhouette fits the building so well that even today, when it is no longer the tallest, it remains one of the handsomest of New York's skyscrapers; and that despite the loss of the title which was one of the sources of its original renown, the Empire State Building remains New York's most widely recognized symbol, and the city's quintessential landmark.

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 Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Empire State Building, 350 Fifth Avenue, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 835, Lot 41, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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Empire State Building
350 Fifth Avenue
Manhattan

Architect: Shreve, Lamb, & Harmon
Built: 1930-1931

Photo Credit: Michael Stein