

**140 West 57th Street Studio Building, (The Beaufort)** 140 West 57th Street, (aka 134-140 West 57th Street), Manhattan. Built, 1907-08, Pollard & Steinam, architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1009, Lot 50.

On July 13, 1999, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 140 West 57th Street Studio Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 3). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were five speakers in support of designation, including a representative of the owner of the building, as well as representatives of the Landmarks Conservancy, the Society for the Architecture of the City, and the Historic Districts Council. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In addition, the Commission has received letters from Assemblyman Richard N. Gottfried and from Community Board 5 in support of designation.

#### Summary

Built in 1907-08 to provide living and working facilities for artists, the studio building at 140 West 57th Street is a rare surviving example of this unusual building type, and a reminder of the early twentieth century period when West 57th Street was a center of artistic activities. Designed by architects Pollard & Steinam, who had previously created several artists' studio cooperatives on West 67th Street, this building profited from the experience of the developers and builders who had worked on the earlier structures. The artists' studio building type, was developed early in the twentieth century, and was an important step toward the acceptance of apartment living for wealthy New Yorkers. The 140 West 57th Street Studio Building, along with its almost identical neighbor at 130 West 57th Street, was built in a prime location, on a wide cross-town street, with other artists' studios, the Art Students' League, Carnegie Hall, and many other nearby sites devoted to art and music. The duplex arrangement of the building allowed for seven double-height stories facing the street, with twelve stories in the rear, and was popular with artists and non-artists alike for the abundant amount of space it provided. Located on the south side of 57<sup>th</sup> Street, the tall, projecting bay windows set in geometrically-ornamented cast iron frames bring in the north light so prized by artists, and suggest the unique spatial arrangement in this building.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### 57<sup>th</sup> Street<sup>1</sup>

Fifty-Seventh Street, extending from the East River to the Hudson is a wide, cross-town thoroughfare that has a distinguished history of elegant housing, artistic activities, and luxury retailing, from the period of its earliest development through today. As with most cross-town streets in New York, the economic level of the population and the types of occupations changed depending on their location on the street. While the noise and odors associated with industrial development and trains were usually found close to the two rivers, the area near Fifth Avenue maintained a panache which led to a comparison with the well-known Parisian street, the Rue de la Paix, because of the elegant homes and shops located there.

The earliest development of 57<sup>th</sup> Street occurred on the block between Fifth and Madison Avenues. The 1869 construction of Mary Mason Jones' "Marble Row," on Fifth Avenue between 57<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup> Streets, inspired other fashionable New Yorkers to build near. While some neighboring luxury dwellings began to appear in the early 1870s, it was Cornelius Vanderbilt II's chateau on the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 57<sup>th</sup> Street built in 1879, that established the character of the street. Homes of such prominent families as the Whitneys, the Harrimans, Rothschilds, Auchinclosses and Schieffelins soon filled the block between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. By 1885, the neighborhood became known as "the very best in the city,"<sup>2</sup>

Farther to the west, the street was quickly built up with only slightly more modest townhouses, since the area was still considered the "choicest" in the city.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, larger structures that helped cultivate the neighborhood's budding artistic environment also began to appear. These included the Rembrandt, at Number 152 (demolished), organized in 1880 by Jared Flagg, a painter and minister, and built by Hubert, Pirsson & Co., as well as the Sherwood Studios (1880, demolished), at Number 58 West 57<sup>th</sup>. Both buildings provided large working spaces for artists, taking advantage of the abundance of light available because of the exceptionally wide street. The Osborne Apartments (1883-85, James E. Ware, 1889, 1906, a designated New York City Landmark), on the corner of Seventh Avenue, was the largest and grandest apartment house of its time, with extra thick walls that have enabled numerous musicians to live here and practice without disturbing their neighbors. Carnegie Hall (1889-95, William B. Tuthill, a designated New York City Landmark), at the southeast corner of the

same intersection, provided elegant and popular performance space, with living studios added in 1896-97 (Henry J. Hardenbergh). Contemporary with this, Hardenbergh's American Fine Arts Society Building (1891-92, 215 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, a designated New York City Landmark) was home to several art associations (including the Architectural League, the Art Students' League, and the Society of American Artists), providing exhibition and classroom facilities for many well-known and would-be artists. For many years, this facility was the setting of "virtually every important exhibition of art and architecture held in the city."<sup>4</sup> Other facilities for artists followed, including the twin studios at 130 and 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Rodin Studios (1916-17, 200 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, a designated New York City Landmark) designed by Cass Gilbert with luxurious Gothic detailing. The Lotos Club, a literary club founded in 1870, made its home at 110 West 57<sup>th</sup> in a 1907-08 building by Donn Barber. By the time the famous Chalif Normal School of Dancing (163 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, G. A. & H. Boehm, a designated New York City Landmark) was built in 1916-17, it was reported that the neighborhood "abounds in structures devoted to the cultivation of the arts."<sup>5</sup> Musical interests were advanced with the 1920s construction of the Steinway and Chickering buildings. At the Steinway Building, in addition to selling pianos, there were also concerts by well-known musicians.

Business invaded the street in the early years of the twentieth century as retailers purchased luxury townhouses, converting them to shops or tearing them down. By 1912, Henri Bendel moved into 10 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, followed shortly after by Bergdorf Goodman (1928, Goodman & Kahn, site of C. Vanderbilt II house), FAO Schwartz (1931, E. J. Kahn, 745 Fifth Avenue), Bonwitt Teller (1930 remodeling by E. J. Kahn, of previous Stewart & Co. store, 1929), and Tiffany (1940, Cross & Cross). In 1929-30, the Victorian Gothic Calvary Baptist Church (123 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street) was replaced by a skyscraper which included space for the church as well as for offices. At Eighth Avenue, Joseph Urban's theatrical, Art Deco, Hearst Magazine Building (1927-28, a designated New York City Landmark) was designed as a headquarters for the publishing empire.

East 57<sup>th</sup> Street was developed with residential buildings, but also included structures associated with artistic activities. Elegant homes were built to the east of Fifth Avenue simultaneously with those to the west and they generally remained in residential use until after the turn of the twentieth century. At that time, many

were adapted or rebuilt by dealers in art and antiques.<sup>6</sup> Interior decorators soon followed the galleries onto the street, creating their own modifications in existing buildings or their own new construction such as the Todhunter Building (1927, 119 East 57<sup>th</sup> Street), designed by Arthur Todhunter and Lewis Patton to resemble medieval buildings in England. In the 1920s several skyscraper buildings were erected, such as the Heckscher Building on the southwestern corner of Fifth Avenue and 57<sup>th</sup> Street (1924, Warren & Wetmore) and the Fuller Building (1929, Walker & Gillette, a designated New York City Landmark) which included several stories devoted to art galleries and decorator showrooms. At the same time, numerous innovative and luxurious apartment buildings were constructed farther to the east, and 57<sup>th</sup> Street once again became an elegant residential area, culminating in the exclusive Sutton Place overlooking the East River.

The 1980s and 90s have brought more drastic transformations to this street, including theme restaurants and mixed-use towers. In spite of the changes, Fifty-seventh Street has maintained its distinction and its reputation as one of New York's most elegant addresses, and as a center for the arts.

#### Development of Cooperative Apartments<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, the architectural and popular press thoroughly examined the question of "the best way" to house New York's growing population. While the ideal American housing type, in New York as elsewhere, was the detached single family house, the growing population and limited land mass available for building created a conflict between these popular ideas and the physical reality. It took many innovative attempts at multi-family housing before it became the accepted mode of living for New York.

By the early 1800s many New Yorkers could not afford the luxury of a spacious home at some distance from their work, and multiple dwellings such as boarding houses, hotels, and subdivided rowhouses began to exist. Tenements for the poor, and "French Flats" for the working class were next to appear, as developers looked for ways to get a higher return on their investment. The Stuyvesant Apartments, built 1869-70 and designed by Richard Morris Hunt marked a turning point in the acceptance of apartment house living for upper class New Yorkers. Throughout the 1870s and 80s, architects and developers elaborated the apartment house idea so that true luxury apartment buildings for the upper classes became acceptable.<sup>8</sup>

Among the sociological impediments to apartment house living in the early years were certain widely held

and highly valued concepts of propriety. These included the idea of a "home" as a safe haven from the rest of the world, the importance of privacy for the family unit, as well as the sense that an individual's life was to be lived among one's social and economic peers, and should not include a mixing of social classes. One way of making this new type of living arrangement more attractive to wealthy clientele was through co-operative apartments. The idea of being able to choose one's neighbors and thus achieve a certain degree of exclusivity was appealing.<sup>9</sup> In addition, co-operative ownership inspired better architecture than had generally been seen in New York apartments, since the owners would be living in the buildings and not just investing in them in hopes of making a large profit. Co-operative owners turned to well-qualified architects and required that they create larger spaces with more luxurious details.<sup>10</sup>

The first true co-operative apartment house in New York was built in 1881 at 80 Madison Avenue (demolished), followed by the Knickerbocker (1882, demolished) on Fifth Avenue at 28th Street, and then the Gramercy Park Apartments in 1883 at 34 Gramercy Park (located within the Gramercy Park Historic District Extension). The Gramercy Park, developed and promoted by Mr. Charles A. Gerlach, was quite successful, returning a large profit for its original investors.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the early co-operative apartments were constructed by Hubert, Pirssen & Company, architects and builders, and carried the appellation Hubert Home Clubs. Home Clubs differed from other co-operative apartments in that there was one central kitchen and dining room which offered food service. Early examples of this type were the Rembrandt, (demolished),<sup>12</sup> No. 121 Madison Avenue, and the Chelsea apartments at 222 West 23rd Street (now Chelsea Hotel, a designated New York City Landmark), the later two built in 1883.

These home clubs or apartment hotels, which sometimes offered hotel services, also served another purpose. In the 1880s, as luxury apartment buildings were starting to be built with greater height, the New York state legislature passed the Daly Law, limiting apartment buildings to five or six stories.<sup>13</sup> Until this law was repealed by the New Tenement House Law of 1901, anyone wishing to build a larger apartment building was obliged to call it an "apartment hotel," since this designation did not carry such severe height restrictions. After 1901, taller apartment buildings were allowed on wider streets.<sup>14</sup>

The next co-operative venture, the Central Park Apartments (1883, 1885, also called the Navarro Flats after its developer, demolished) located between 58<sup>th</sup>

and 59<sup>th</sup> Streets, on Seventh Avenue, was a financial disaster. Unlike the previous co-operative arrangements, the owners did not have sole control of the building, thus creating a difficult and ultimately unworkable arrangement.<sup>15</sup> Despite the organizational differences, the failure of the Central Park Apartments effectively put a stop to the further development of co-operative apartments until the artists' studio buildings on 67<sup>th</sup> Street were constructed after the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup>

#### Artists' Housing and Studios

"People have no conception of how difficult it is for one to find a suitable studio in New York," stated artist V.V. Sewell in 1903.<sup>17</sup> Artists wanted studios with adequate space for creating and displaying their works, and with north light to provide the even illumination for their painting and sculpting. Studios with these qualities, plus living areas, were quite unusual. In 1857 Richard Morris Hunt designed the first New York building specifically for artists, the Tenth Street Studios, located at 15 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, which was privately owned by art collector James B. Johnson. It contained twenty-five studios, some with bedrooms attached. Later in the century, some artists found working space in a few studios: the Bryant Park Studios (80 West 40<sup>th</sup> Street, a designated New York City Landmark), the Sherwood Studios (58 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, demolished), the Rembrandt (152 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, demolished), or the Carnegie Studios (160 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, a designated New York City Landmark). These studios were always fully occupied and did not begin to meet the demand for such spaces.

These two factors – the growing need for artists' working and living spaces, and the financial advantages of co-operative apartment ownership -- first came together in the 67<sup>th</sup> Street Cooperative Studio Building at 23-27 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street, built in 1901-03, to the designs of architects Sturgis & Simonson. It was designed to meet the specific needs of artists, with double-height studios illuminated by northern light, and attached living quarters. By arranging the bedrooms, dining, and service rooms so that they were half as high as the studios, an efficient use of space could be achieved. The building also included smaller studios, some with and some without living quarters. The concept of the duplex living and working studios originated with the landscape painter Henry W. Ranger who, when no speculative builder could be found for the project, organized a group of artists to make subscriptions to finance the new building.<sup>18</sup> The artists' initial investment provided construction money and entitled each investor to a permanent lease on an

apartment, and shares in the corporation which controlled the building. Some of the apartments were retained as rental units, and the income thus produced provided the capitol for the building's maintenance.

This building was so successful that it was immediately followed by several other studio residences in the same area. These included The Central Park Studios (11-15 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street, 1904-05, Simonson, Pollard & Steinam), The Atelier Building (29-33 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street, 1904-05, Simonson, Pollard & Steinam), and the Hotel des Artistes (1 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street, 1915-18, George M. Pollard), all located within the Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District. Soon non-artists became aware of the advantages of these large, open rooms for entertaining and the sense of spaciousness they provided, and moved into many of them. The studios on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street were not only modeled after these earlier studios, but had the same architects and several of the same builders and developers.

#### 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building

In August, 1907, four lots on 57<sup>th</sup> Street were purchased by Robert Vonnoh, a painter who was living at 27 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>19</sup> They were then transferred to the 136 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Corporation, which listed Walter G. Merritt as president and Payson McL. Merrill as secretary. The four and five story masonry buildings on the site were torn down. A new building application was filed at the Department of Buildings in December, 1907, for a "high-class elevator apartment house."<sup>20</sup> Construction, by the William J. Taylor Co-Operative Building Company, was completed in January, 1909.

Plans for the building called for seven double-height stories facing 57<sup>th</sup> Street, and twelve stories in the rear.<sup>21</sup> Original plans called for thirty-six units in the building.<sup>22</sup> The double-height studios were placed on the end bays indicated by tall windows and on the center bay. To bring in even more light, the bays extended beyond the plane of the building in a trapezoidal shape.

No. 140 and No.130 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street were nearly identical buildings, designed and constructed by the same architects and contractors as the studios on 67<sup>th</sup> Street, who used this previous experience to their advantage. In contrast to the 67<sup>th</sup> Street studios, these buildings were located on the southern side of the street so that the studios, located in the front of the building could receive north light. By locating the building on a wide street, sunlight into the studios would be assured and not blocked by some future tall building. The wide street frontage allowed for broad proportions, which were highlighted by fine details. An advertising

brochure for the building at 130 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street<sup>23</sup> listed the numerous amenities available in the building, including: passenger and service elevators, vacuum cleaning plant, telephones, mail chute, dumb waiters, and laundry fitted with steam and gas dryers. The types of apartments were also explained. The largest were those on each side of the 57<sup>th</sup> Street facade and included a studio with a 20-foot high ceiling, numerous living and service rooms, four bedrooms with baths, and one servant's room. Smaller apartments in the rear of the building did not have high ceilings, had only two bedrooms, a pantry-kitchenette (rather than a full kitchen), and no area for servants. Single studio rooms, located in the front of the building between the large studio apartments were also available, either with or without another apartment.

While this building was designed for artists and many lived there, they were not the only residents. Census records from 1915 and 1925 show that many professionals such as lawyers, stock brokers, and teachers lived in the building also.

Alteration records are not available for 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, but changes there seem to have paralleled those at No. 130. In 1922, because of a city-wide plan to widen the streets, the areaways and other sidewalk encumbrances were cleared, storefronts were created at the ground story level, and the entrance stairs were removed.<sup>24</sup> Later changes to No. 140 include the removal of the metal cornice at the top, the conversion of engaged columns flanking the entrance to flat pilasters, the replacement of the window sash, as well as the modernization of the ground story.

The building remained a co-operative until 1944 when it was converted to rental units.

### Pollard & Steinam

George Mort Pollard (b. 1865)

Joseph L. Steinam (dates undetermined)

George Mort Pollard was born in Brooklyn and studied at the College of the City of New York, now City College. He established an architectural practice in New York around 1894 and formed a partnership in 1897 with Joseph L. Steinam, a member of the Architectural League who lived in New York. Pollard & Steinam specialized in the design of large studio buildings developed to accommodate living and working spaces for artists, typically in duplex units. In 1904-05, Pollard and Steinam worked with B. Hustace Simonson (dates undetermined) on the design of two neo-Renaissance style artists studio buildings on West 67th Street (No. 11-15 and No. 29-33, both within the

Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District). They also worked with Charles A. Platt on the design of a distinguished, neo-Renaissance style apartment building at 135 East 66th Street (1905-07, a designated New York City Landmark). Independently, Pollard also designed another studio building, the neo-Gothic style, Hotel des Artistes, also on West 67th Street (1915-18, located within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District).

Continuing the development of an artist's enclave on 67th Street, in 1906-07 Pollard & Steinam were hired by Robert W. Vonnah to design another neo-Renaissance style studio building at No. 39-41 (also located within the Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District). Vonnah was an artist who had his own studio in the first artists' residence to be constructed there, at No. 23-27 West 67th Street (1902-03, Simonson & Sturgis, within the Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District). This building clearly served as a precedent for the two others on 57th Street which Vonnah hired these same architects to create in 1907.

### Description

The building at 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street fills its mid-block site so that only the front elevation is visible. It is fourteen stories (seven double) high and five bays wide, symmetrically arranged, with metal-framed windows, and continuous brick piers between each bay. The two-story base is separated from the upper floors by a broad, terra-cotta cornice.

The central entrance remains at the base, set within a slightly projecting two-story pavilion which is faced with rusticated, vermiculated limestone. The non-historic glass door is recessed within a deep reveal that is ornamented by terra cotta rosettes. Around the arched opening are voussoirs and a large central volute over the arch, with two flat pilasters flanking the entrance. Centered above the doorway is a rectangular window opening. It is mostly obscured by a large, three-dimensional sign. The rest of the base has been reconfigured to accommodate the current restaurant. The ground story has four, non-historic glass doors and irregular window openings set within a textured surface treatment. At the second story level the original window openings remain: a pair of windows next to the entry and a group of four in the outermost bay. On the eastern side, the windows are original, with 3/3 double-hung sash. The windows on the western side have all been replaced by single-pane, metal-framed sash.

The terra-cotta cornice which lies above the base has a broad frieze ornamented by triglyphs and disks. Above this, the cornice is embellished with lozenges

## 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 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building has a special character and a 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 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building (originally called "The Beaufort"), constructed in 1907-08, is a rare surviving example of an artists' studio building incorporating both living and working space in large, double-height rooms; that it was designed by the New York architectural firm of Pollard & Steinam which had pioneered this type of building on West 67<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan; that it was constructed on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street at a time when that area was rich with buildings and organizations which supported and promoted artistic endeavors; that, while studio buildings were developed as a response to an acknowledged need for accommodations for working artists, they were also popular among middle and upper-class non-artist residents because of the luxurious amount of living space they provided; that co-operative buildings were developed in the late nineteenth century and gained popularity in the early years of the twentieth century for their financial advantages and also for the exclusivity they allowed among their owners; that the cooperative financial organization, as well as design elements on this studio building followed the example set on the West 67<sup>th</sup> Street artists buildings, since several of the same people had been involved in the earlier buildings; that the double-height rooms with projecting windows provided spacious areas for visual artists to work, with large amounts of north light; that its geometrically-ornamented, projecting window bays give it a distinctive presence on the wide and busy thoroughfare of 57<sup>th</sup> Street.

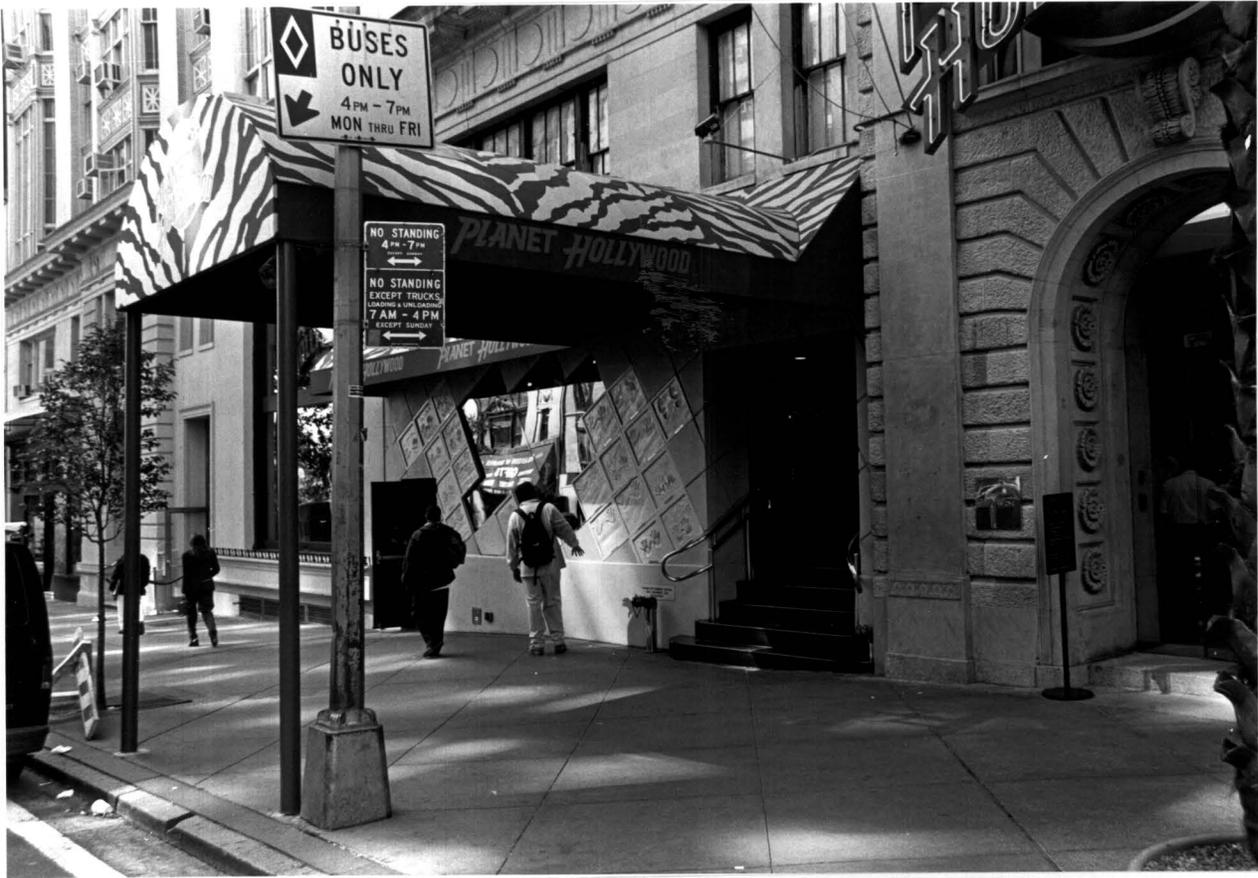
Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building, 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street (aka 134-140 West 57th Street), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 1009, Lot 50, as its Landmark Site.



Nos. 130 and 140 West Fifty-Seventh Street Studio Buildings  
Borough of Manhattan  
Photo: c. 1909  
Courtesy of Museum of the City of New York



No. 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building  
Borough of Manhattan  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



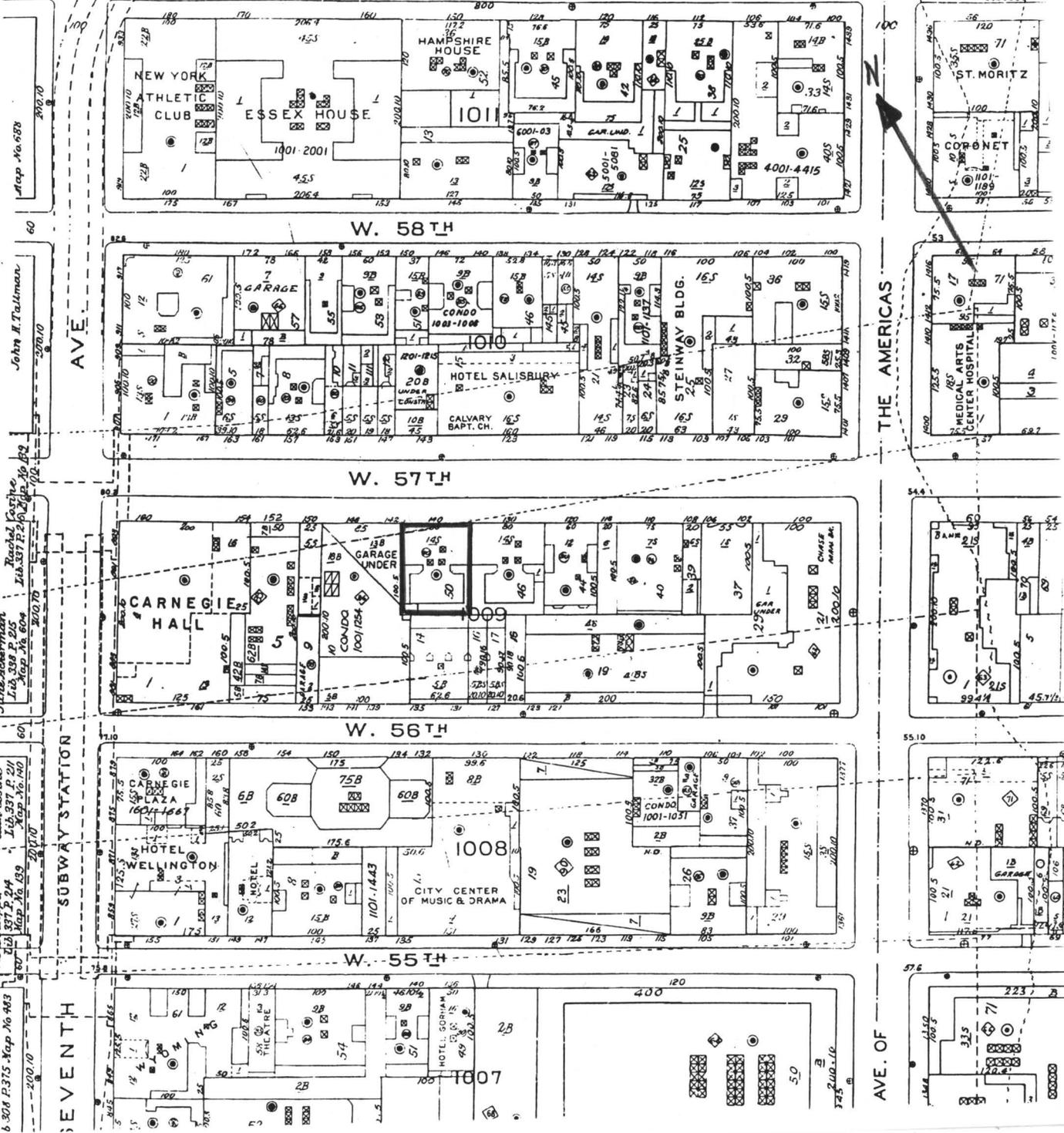
No. 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building  
Ground story details

*Photos: Carl Foster*



C E N T R A L

CENTRAL PARK



Map No. 688

John H. Tallman

Recht Co. Inc. 114 337 P. 24

Cath. Centre 114 337 P. 24

Joseph Roper 114 337 P. 24

Leborak Bertine 114 337 P. 24

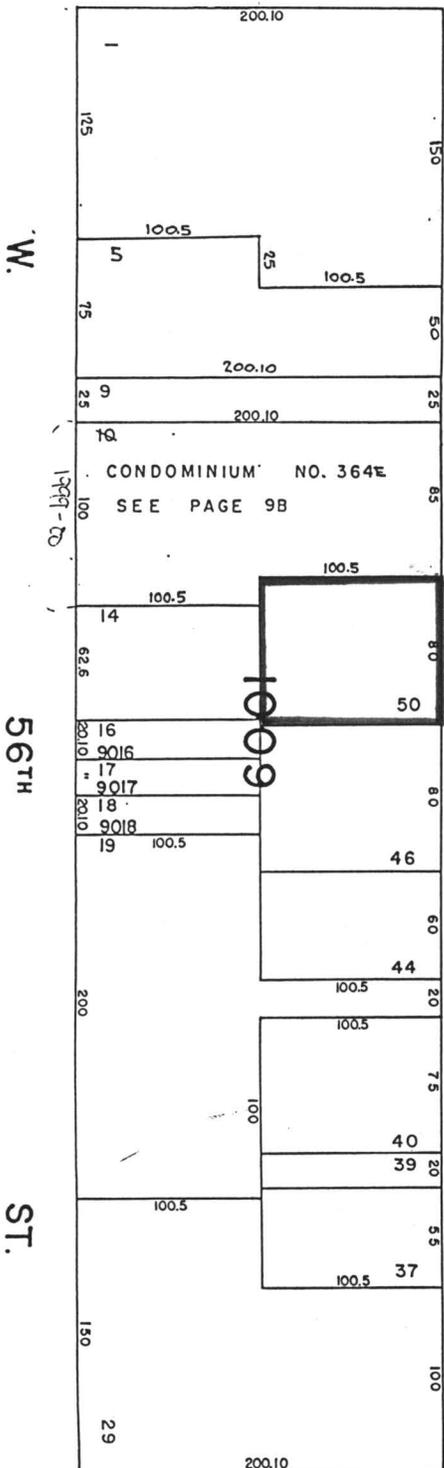
140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building  
 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1009, Lot 50  
 Source: Sanborn Manhattan Landbook, 1998-99, Plate 83

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56TH

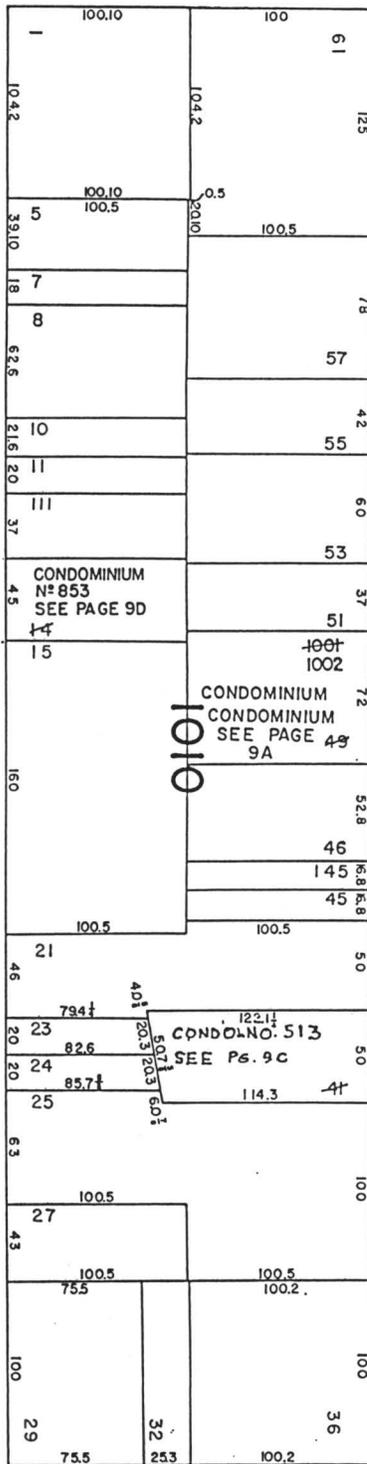
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SEE PAGE 8

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57TH

ST.



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58TH

ST.

SEE PAGE 10

AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS

140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Building  
 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1009, Lot 50  
 Source: New York City Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map

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Block 1009  
 Lot 50

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