

A.T. DEMAREST & COMPANY and PEERLESS MOTOR CAR COMPANY BUILDINGS (later **GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION BUILDING**); 224-228 West 57th Street (aka 1758-1770 Broadway), Manhattan. Built 1909; Francis H. Kimball, architect; Purdy & Henderson, consulting engineer; George A. Fuller Co., builders; New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., terra cotta.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1028, Lot 47.

On October 31, 2000, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the A.T. Demarest & Company and Peerless Motor Car Company Buildings (later General Motors Corporation Building) and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the owner and the Historic Districts Council. In addition, the Commission received a letter in support of designation from the Friends of Terra Cotta.

Summary

The A.T. Demarest & Company and Peerless Motor Car Company Buildings, located in the heart of the “Automobile Row” section of Broadway in Manhattan, were used by the automobile industry for over six decades. They were constructed in 1909 to the designs of eminent architect Francis H. Kimball, in collaboration with consulting engineer Purdy & Henderson and George A. Fuller Co., builders. Kimball had emerged in the forefront of early skyscraper design in New York City, particularly during his collaboration with G. Kramer Thompson in 1892-98. A.T. Demarest & Co., started in 1860 by Aaron T. Demarest, was a carriage manufacturer that also ventured into the production of automobile bodies around 1902. The Peerless Motor Car Co. of New York was a branch of the Cleveland luxury automobile manufacturing firm. Though architecturally harmonious, the two buildings were constructed separately for these firms – the Peerless building was L-shaped in plan and wrapped around the corner Demarest building - and have subtly different ornamental schemes. Incorporating neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque stylistic references, they were designed to relate to the mammoth neo-Gothic style Broadway Tabernacle then located next door to the south. Kimball employed the technology of contemporary skyscrapers for these buildings. Nine stories in height (plus a partial tenth story and two-story tower on the Peerless building), they are of steel-frame curtain wall construction above concrete piers and are almost entirely clad on the principal facades in white matt glazed terra cotta (now painted) manufactured by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., the only major architectural terra cotta firm in New York City. This represents an early and significant use of terra-cotta cladding for tall buildings in New York. These buildings had ground-story automobile and carriage showrooms (among the earliest surviving in New York), with repair shops and warerooms above. Both structures were acquired in 1918 and combined into one office building by the recently-formed General Motors Corporation for its initial major corporate headquarters. The building was used by General Motors for over fifty years, until its purchase in 1977 by the Hearst Corporation to house offices of its Hearst Magazines division.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Automobile Row¹

The American automobile, or “horseless carriage,” was initially manufactured in the 1890s as a luxury item. In 1902, there were a dozen “significant producers” of automobiles in the United States. Three dozen new automobile manufacturers, including a number of former carriage and bicycle companies, had joined the marketplace by 1907, but several firms had failed. Henry Ford, among others, worked on the mass production of automobiles, thus enabling costs to be lowered around 1910. By the 1920s, there were forty-four American automobile manufacturers, but 125 firms had failed and the median longevity of these firms was only seven years. The industry would eventually be monopolized by a few large corporations concentrated in Michigan.

Rider's New York City guidebook in 1923 observed that Broadway, from the high West 40s “to approximately 66th St. is the section popularly known as ‘Automobile Row,’ comprising the New York sales rooms of the leading automobile manufacturers, tire makers and dealers in special automobile parts or accessories.”² This was actually a northern continuation along Broadway of the horse, carriage, and harness businesses that had been located around Longacre (later Times) Square since the late-nineteenth century. As early as 1907, the *New York Times* remarked of this segment of Broadway that “it would certainly be difficult to recall any industry which has within so brief a period given so much new life to an entire section as has the automobile trade... Land values have at least doubled within the last five or six years...”³ By 1910, there were dozens of automobile-related businesses, including many small automobile or body manufacturers, lining Broadway particularly between West 48th Street and Columbus Circle. Many of these businesses were located in structures built specifically for their automobile-related uses into the 1920s, including: Studebaker Brothers Co. Building (1902, James Brown Lord; demolished), No. 1600, a factory-office structure for the manufacture of wagons, carriages, automobiles, and trucks; A.T. Demarest & Company and Peerless Motor Car Company Buildings (1909, Francis H. Kimball), Nos. 1770 and 1760; United States Rubber Co. Building (1911-12, Carrere & Hastings), No. 1784-1790;⁴ Ford Motor Co. Building (1917, Albert Kahn), No. 1710; Fisk Rubber Co. Building (1921, Carrere & Hastings and R.H. Shreve), No. 1765-1767; and General Motors Corp. Building (1926-27, Shreve & Lamb), No. 1769-1787, which was built above the

earlier three-story Colonnade Building (1923, William Welles Bosworth).⁵

In 1917, *The Hub*, an American automobile manufacturers’ journal, identified New York as

*a center of auto manufacture... one of the chief, if not the foremost of markets, for the sale and distribution of automobiles... [but also] a locality where the assembling, manufacturing, and service branches of the industry have developed to a remarkable extent. As a sales center, New York is actually the center of the country, practically every motor car manufacturer in the country maintaining a branch office in this city.*⁶

By that time, “within easy reach of... ‘automobile row’,” across the Queensboro Bridge in Queens, a district had developed that contained “13 automobile manufacturing, assembling and service plants, and 29 accessory and parts concerns.”⁷

A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings⁸

In 1902, the U.S. Realty & Improvement Co. acquired five lots at the southeast corner of Broadway and West 57th Street. These lots were transferred in 1905 to its subsidiary, the Island Realty Co. (R.G. Babbage, president), which intended to construct a hotel or apartment house on the site. The three corner lots were instead leased in December 1908 to A.T. Demarest & Co., and the remaining two lots (that formed an L around the corner lots) were conveyed to the Doan Realty Co., a subsidiary of the Peerless Motor Car Co. The three corner lots were transferred to the Matoaka Realty Co. in July 1909. These two parcels became two single tax lots. In January-February 1909, architect Francis H. Kimball filed for the construction of two buildings, for A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. The Peerless building was L-shaped in plan, wrapping around the corner Demarest building. Both nine stories plus basement (with a partial tenth story and a two-story tower on the Peerless building) in height and architecturally harmonious, the buildings were expected to cost an estimated \$150,000 and \$175,000. The *New York Times* in January 1909 observed that the exterior design “has been made to harmonize with that of the Broadway Tabernacle... as far as practicable in a commercial building.”⁹ The adjacent Broadway Tabernacle (1903-05, Barney & Chapman; demolished c. 1970), 1756 Broadway, was a mammoth neo-Gothic

style structure.¹⁰ Kimball incorporated neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque stylistic references for the two new buildings, and employed subtly different ornamental schemes. The principal facades are articulated vertically with three-bay sections: the Peerless building had the three southern sections on Broadway and the easternmost section on 57th Street, while the Demarest building had the northern two sections on Broadway and the western four sections on 57th Street that joined in a canted two-bay corner. While appearing as tall office buildings on the exterior, these buildings in fact housed automobile and carriage functions. The wide bays of the two-story base, framed by pilasters, were originally for automobile and carriage showrooms, which are today among the earliest surviving in New York.

Construction began on both buildings by early March 1909 and proceeded extraordinarily quickly. The Demarest building was completed at the end of June 1909, while the Peerless building was completed at the end of September. The George A. Fuller Co. was the general contractor, and Purdy & Henderson served as consulting engineer. The buildings were constructed with technology similar to that of contemporary skyscrapers. Each structure has a steel frame, resting on concrete piers, that supports curtain walls consisting of brick clad almost entirely on the principal facades in white matt glazed terra cotta (now painted). The New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co. manufactured the terra cotta,¹¹ which includes a profusion of ornamental detail. This company, organized in 1886 by Orlando B. Potter with Walter and Asahel Clarke Geer, was the only major architectural terra cotta firm in New York City and became one of the largest such manufacturers in the United States, remaining in business until bankruptcy in 1932. The Demarest and Peerless buildings represent an early and significant use of terra-cotta cladding for tall buildings in New York, comparable to the earlier Bayard-Condict Building (1897-99, Louis H. Sullivan), 65-69 Bleecker Street, which was clad entirely in cream-colored terra cotta.¹² The Demarest and Peerless buildings were featured in a publication on "The Garage" by the National Terra Cotta Society around 1918-20.¹³ They were also critiqued in 1909 by *Architects' & Builders' Magazine*, which found that

they fill out the Broadway block and abut the Broadway Tabernacle on the 56th Street corner in a harmonious and satisfactory manner. Carried out in white terra cotta, the Gothic treatment is suitable in keeping with the design of the church, and makes a bond between the business structure[s] and the

*house of worship, which would hardly seem a possibility were it not before our eyes.*¹⁴

A.T. Demarest & Co. was a carriage and, later, automobile body manufacturer that was started in 1860 by Aaron T. Demarest. Born in Nyack, New York, Demarest (1841-1908) moved to New York City in 1855 and later began his own carriage business on Park Place. After accepting Gabriel C. Chevalier as a partner, the firm moved to Broadway between Houston and Bleecker Streets. It relocated to a new building (1889-90, Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell; demolished) at 335 Fifth Avenue (at 33rd Street). According to the *New York Times*, the company was "internationally known... [and] won the world market for a product that disappeared with the rise of the automobile."¹⁵ A.T. Demarest & Co. began to also manufacture the bodies for automobiles around 1902. A.T. Demarest retired after a stroke around that time, and the company was then headed by his son Warren G. Demarest and his brother William R. Demarest, along with Chevalier. The firm's new Broadway building housed its "offices and warerooms"¹⁶ for carriages and automobiles, with one passenger and one vehicle elevator.

The Peerless Motor Car Co. of New York, located at 220 West 41st Street since around 1905, was a branch of the company headquartered in Cleveland. Founded in Cincinnati in 1868, the Peerless Co. originally manufactured clothes wringers, but ventured into bicycles and moved to Cleveland in the 1890s, manufacturing automobiles after 1900.¹⁷ Both the parent company and its New York subsidiary were headed by Lewis Harris Kittredge of Cleveland, who was also president of Doan Realty Co. and became president of the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers in 1910.¹⁸ Peerless produced luxury automobiles that became known, along with those of the Packard and Pierce-Arrow companies, as one of the "Three P's." The Peerless firm came under the financial control of the National Electric Co. in 1913. A 1910 publication on the new Peerless Motor Car Co. Building in New York City stated that "the first floor is occupied by the Peerless salesroom [and office on the mezzanine], while the nine upper floors are devoted to various workrooms appropriate to a high class motor car establishment."¹⁹ These workrooms were designed for the convenient and efficient service of Peerless automobiles, including "reconstruction, modification, repairs, overhauling, and special order work ... under one roof."²⁰ Peerless made this commitment to customer service in a number of American cities. In New York, "the equipment necessary to carry on the work ... includes an organization of about 250 operatives, and necessary

machinery for working with steel, iron, tin, wood, leather, etc., together with an office organization to maintain the necessary system for the proper operation of the plant.”²¹ The building was equipped with one passenger elevator and two large automobile elevators. (In 1912 one of the vehicle elevators was removed). The automobile entrance was on 57th Street, and an interior turntable assisted in transferring the vehicles. The company reported that “the ground, building and contents represent an investment of over \$1,000,000.”²²

The Architect ²³

Born in Maine, Francis Hatch Kimball (1845-1919) worked as a teenager in a relative’s building firm, served in the Navy during the Civil War, and in 1867 entered the firm of the Boston architect Louis P. Rogers (who later joined with Gridley J.F. Bryant). In 1869, Kimball became supervisor of this firm’s work in Hartford, Connecticut, and in 1873 was appointed superintending architect of the Gothic style Trinity College buildings (1874-82) in that city designed by English architect and theorist William Burges. Kimball also received independent commissions in Hartford, including the Orphan Asylum (1876-78, demolished). He moved to New York City to work on the remodelling of the Madison Square Theater in 1879 and soon formed a partnership with the English-born architect Thomas Wisedell, which lasted until the latter’s death in 1884. Their firm was responsible for the Moorish style Casino Theater (1882, demolished), 1400 Broadway. Kimball practiced alone²⁴ until 1892, producing designs in a variety of styles and executed with notable terra-cotta ornament, including: the Catholic Apostolic Church (1885-86), 417 West 57th Street; Emmanuel Baptist Church (1886-87), 279 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn; Corbin Building (1888-89), 11 John Street; Montauk Club (1889-91), 1925 Eighth Avenue, Brooklyn;²⁵ Harrigan’s (later Garrick) Theater (1890-91, demolished), 65 West 35th Street; and the exterior of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad Terminal headhouse (1891-93), Philadelphia. In the iron-and-steel-framed Fifth Avenue Theater (1891-92, demolished), 1185 Broadway, Kimball developed a technique for constructing foundations with concrete cylinders sunk by mechanical means that was a precursor of the later pneumatic caisson system of skyscraper foundation construction.

Kimball emerged in the forefront of early skyscraper design in New York City during his collaboration from 1892 to 1898 with George Kramer Thompson (1859-1935). Kimball & Thompson’s seminal seventeen-story (plus tower) Manhattan Life Insurance Co. Building (1893-94 demolished), 64-66

Broadway, designed as the result of a competition during which they formed their partnership, was the tallest building constructed in the city at that time and is credited with being the first New York skyscraper with a full iron and steel frame, set on pneumatic concrete caissons. Among the firm’s other commissions were the Gertrude Rhinelander Waldo Mansion (1895-98), 867 Madison Avenue, in the neo-French Renaissance style, the Standard Oil Building addition (1896-97), 26 Broadway, and the neo-Classical style Empire Building (1897-98), 71 Broadway.²⁶ Kimball’s later skyscrapers, designed in a variety of styles, include the neo-Gothic Trinity and U.S. Realty Buildings (1904-07), 111, and 115 Broadway; J. & W. Seligman & Co. Building (1906-07, with Julian C. Levi), 1 William Street;²⁷ Trust Co. of America Building (1906-07), 39 Wall Street; City Investing Co. Building (1906-08, demolished), Broadway and Cortlandt Street; and Adams Express Co. Building (1912-16), 61 Broadway. He formed a partnership with Frederick H. Roosa in 1915, but a petition was filed against the firm in 1917 which apparently led to involuntary bankruptcy. Upon his death in 1919, the *New York Times* referred to Kimball as “the father of the skyscraper,”²⁸ reflecting his technical innovations and involvement with many fine early skyscrapers.

Consulting Engineer ²⁹

The designs of such innovative architects as Kimball would not have been realized without the collaboration of skilled engineers and builders. The engineering firm of Purdy & Henderson was founded by two of America’s leading engineers, both of whom were prominent in the construction circles of Chicago and New York. Corydon Tyler Purdy (1859-1944), born in Grand Rapids (now Wisconsin Rapids), Wisconsin, began his career as a draftsman for the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad and eventually became an assistant engineer for the Chicago & Evanston Railway. He received a civil engineering degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1886, spent two years as city engineer of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and a year with the Keystone Bridge Co., and in 1889 opened an office in Chicago as a consulting structural engineer. Realizing the potential for the use of steel in tall buildings, Purdy became one of the early innovative specialists of the steel-framed skyscraper. He was structural engineer for many of Chicago’s important early skyscrapers, working with architects Holabird & Roche on the Tacoma Building (1887-89), Monadnock Building addition (1893), Marquette Building (1893-94), and Old Colony Building (1893-94); and with Burnham &

Root on the Woman's Temple (1891-92). As part of the firm of [Charles G.] Wade & Purdy, he joined Theodore Starrett as one of the designing engineers of the Rand McNally Building in Chicago (1889-90, Burnham & Root), credited as the first building supported on an entirely steel frame.

Purdy formed the firm of Purdy & Henderson, engineers and contractors, in 1893 and moved the principal office to New York in 1894. Lightner Henderson (1866-1916), a draftsman and structural steel designer then in Purdy's employ, served as president and chief engineer of the firm for fifteen years. Purdy & Henderson, with branch offices in Chicago, Boston, and Havana, designed bridges as well as the structures of many prominent buildings. In New York City, often in association with the George A. Fuller Co., these included the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel (1891-97, Henry J. Hardenbergh, demolished); Broadway-Chambers Building (1899-1900, Cass Gilbert), 277 Broadway; Fuller (Flatiron) Building (1901-03, D.H. Burnham & Co.), Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street; Whitehall Building (1902-04, Hardenbergh), 17 Battery Place; Pennsylvania Station (1902-11, McKim, Mead & White, demolished), for which Henderson designed one of its most notable features, the exposed concourse steelwork; New York Times Building (1903-05, Eidlitz & McKenzie, altered), Broadway and West 42nd Street; Plaza Hotel (1905-07, Hardenbergh), 2 Central Park South; Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. Tower (1907-09, Napoleon LeBrun & Sons), 1 Madison Avenue; and Municipal Building (1907-14, McKim, Mead & White), 1 Centre Street. A significant later commission was the Starrett-Lehigh Building (1930-31, Russell G. & Walter M. Cory, with Yasuo Matsui), 601-625 West 26th Street.³⁰ Throughout his career, Corydon Purdy was a leader in the effort to further the professional relationship between engineers and architects.

The Builders³¹

The George A. Fuller Co. was founded in Chicago in 1882 by George Allon Fuller (1851-1900). Trained as an architect at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Fuller started as a draftsman in the Boston firm of Peabody & Stearns, where he became a partner at age 25. Realizing his interest in construction, he became a partner in the contracting firm of Clark & Fuller in Chicago in 1880-82. After Fuller formed his own company, his reputation was based on an extensive knowledge of construction and interest in new technology, and the firm became widely known as one of the premier skyscraper builders. After Fuller's death, his son-in-law Harry S.

Black became head of the company. The firm moved its headquarters to New York and became a major force in the construction and promotion of tall office buildings in the city. Among the thousands of buildings constructed by the firm were its own headquarters, better known as the Flatiron Building, Pennsylvania Station, Plaza Hotel, J. & W. Seligman & Co. Building, and U.S. General Post Office (1908-13, McKim, Mead & White), Eighth Avenue and West 31st Street.³²

General Motors Corp.³³

The General Motors Co. was incorporated in New Jersey in 1908 as a holding company to acquire two Detroit automobile manufacturing firms, the Olds Motor Works, begun in 1899 by Ransom Eli Olds, and the Buick Motor Co., established in 1903 by David Dunbar Buick. In 1909, General Motors purchased the Cadillac Automobile Co., founded by Henry M. Leland in 1903, and the Oakland Motor Car Co., established in 1907. This merger was effected by William Crapo Durant (1861-1947), an ambitious millionaire whose Durant-Dort Carriage Co. (founded in 1886 with Josiah Dallas Dort as the Flint Road Cart Co.) in Flint, Michigan, was the world's largest manufacturer of horse-drawn vehicles. Durant, realizing the potential of horseless vehicles, took over the management of the Buick company in 1904. By 1908, Buick was the second largest American manufacturer of automobiles and operated the world's largest automobile factory. Many small automobile companies were failing at the time due to competition, and a number of individuals were seeking consolidation and stabilization within the industry. Durant speculated that a large firm could be profitable by eliminating duplication of services and offering a variety of products. His costly attempts to quickly expand the General Motors Co., however, with the acquisition of twenty-five related businesses, caused him to lose control of General Motors to investment bankers amidst an economic slump in 1910.

Durant hired Louis Chevrolet, a Swiss-born mechanic and racing driver, to design and build a car that would be named after him, and formed the Chevrolet Motor Co. in Detroit in 1911. Durant opened a small Chevrolet assembly plant in New York City, at 12th Avenue and West 56th Street, mainly to increase the company's visibility on the East Coast and to attract Wall Street investors, since parts were shipped from Michigan and the assembled vehicles were shipped back. By 1914, Durant had ended his association with the Durant-Dort Carriage Co., moved to New York to a Park Avenue apartment and, as president of Chevrolet, "transferred his offices from

Detroit to New York to push sales from that center and also to work out a plan which he had formed for recovering control of General Motors.”³⁴ Durant reorganized and re-incorporated the Chevrolet Motor Co. in Delaware in 1915, acquiring the stock of the Chevrolet Motor Co. of New York and other Chevrolet-related companies. Quickly becoming a successful firm, Chevrolet produced a small, low-priced four-cylinder automobile in 1915-16 that proved quite popular. Durant convinced enough General Motors stockholders to exchange their shares for Chevrolet stock for him to re-establish control of General Motors in May 1916. He became president of the General Motors Corp., created in October 1916 as an operating (instead of a holding) company to acquire the stock of the General Motors Co., the assets of which were taken over in August 1917. Chevrolet, then the second largest American automobile manufacturer, became a division of General Motors beginning in May 1918.

By 1920, when Durant was again forced to leave the company, General Motors had reached the select rank of a billion-dollar corporation. Acquiring all or part of more than thirty companies involved in the production of automobiles or trucks,³⁵ General Motors developed one of the world’s largest and most sophisticated systems of industrial administration, research, and development. By 1927, it emerged as one of the nation’s ten most profitable firms, and Chevrolet became the top-selling car in America in 1929. General Motors also offered Cadillac, La Salle, Buick, Oldsmobile, Opel, and Pontiac automobiles, and GMC and Chevrolet trucks. Whereas in 1921 General Motors’ cars represented twelve percent of total American sales, by 1941 they constituted forty-four percent, and in the 1950s were fully half. In 1977, General Motors operated 117 assembly, manufacturing, and warehousing plants in twenty-one states, as well as plants in thirty-four foreign countries.

General Motors Corp. Building ³⁶

The Peerless Motor Car Co. remained in its building only until about 1915, and A.T. Demarest & Co. leased its property for only two years beyond that. Matoaka Realty Co. leased the Demarest building to the Chevrolet Motor Co. of New York in May 1917 and sold it to Chevrolet in October 1918. That same month, the General Motors Corp. acquired the Peerless building from Doan Realty Co.³⁷ Chevrolet, which had become a division of General Motors in May, transferred its building to the parent corporation in November 1918. The firm of architect Henry J. Hardenbergh combined the two buildings internally into one office building, retaining the ground-story

automobile showrooms.³⁸

The combined former A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings served as the initial major headquarters of the General Motors Corp. Besides general offices, the building contained offices of Chevrolet, General Motors Acceptance Corp., and General Motors Export Co. Durant commissioned an enormous new administration headquarters building in Detroit, which was constructed in 1919-22 to the design of architect Albert Kahn. General Motors’ annual report of 1920 noted that “the growth of business has necessitated repeated enlargement of office force and office facilities, finally culminating in the acquisition of the General Motors Building at the corner of Broadway and 57th Street, New York City, and erection of the General Motors Building... in Detroit.”³⁹ The Demarest/Peerless building remained its New York corporate headquarters until 1927 when General Motors leased about a third of the office space in the new building at 1769-1787 Broadway (which became known as the General Motors Corp. Building), located catty-corner from the Demarest/Peerless building. General Motors retained its older building, which housed showrooms and various divisions of the corporation until the early 1970s, including Cadillac, LaSalle, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Buick, Delco Appliances, Frigidaire, GMC Foreign Distributors, and Argonaut Realty Corp. Argonaut Realty, based in Detroit, was established in 1927 “to acquire sites in various cities and to erect service stations and salesrooms for dealers.”⁴⁰ It became known as the Argonaut Building, undoubtedly to distinguish it from the newer General Motors building. From 1942 into the early 1950s, the U.S. Government Office of War Information (later Office of Information and Educational Exchange), a division of the State Department, had offices and broadcast studios in this building.⁴¹

Hearst Magazines ⁴²

The Hearst Corp., which leased offices in General Motors’ Argonaut Building by 1975, acquired the property in July 1977.⁴³ A giant in American communications, the firm started when George Hearst, a California mining and ranching millionaire, won the *San Francisco Examiner* as payment for a gambling debt in 1880. His son, William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951) took over the paper in 1887; his crusading and sensationalism helped to build up the paper’s circulation and profitability, making it the largest newspaper on the West Coast within eight years. Hearst moved to New York City in 1895 and acquired the *New York Morning Journal*. He placed it in direct competition with Joseph Pulitzer’s *World*

and built it into the leading Democratic newspaper in the United States, as well as the paper with the largest number of subscriptions in the world, by 1900. After founding and purchasing other newspapers, Hearst ventured into magazines with the creation of *Motor* (1903) and the acquisition of *Cosmopolitan* (1905), *House Beautiful*, and *Good Housekeeping* (1911). As his corporate headquarters, Hearst commissioned the International Magazine Building (1927-28, Joseph Urban and George B. Post & Sons) at 951-969 Eighth Avenue,⁴⁴ one block to the west of the Argonaut Building. Hearst's holdings grew by the 1930s to include twenty-eight newspapers, thirteen magazines, ten radio stations, news and newsreel services, and motion picture production. Hearst lost control of his empire, however, to creditors in 1937. With the sale and consolidation of assets, the corporation reached stability after World War II and entered into television broadcasting in 1948. Following Hearst's death in 1951 and changes in newspaper readership, the corporation's newspaper chain collapsed in the 1950s-60s. The company expanded further into television stations and magazines, purchasing *Sports Afield* (1953) and *Popular Mechanics* (1958), and successfully licensed foreign editions of its publications. Avon Publications, Inc., a popular paperbacks marketer, was acquired in 1959. By the 1980s, the Hearst Magazines division had become the largest American monthly magazine producer, achieving success through its leading magazines, such as *Colonial Homes*, *Esquire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Town and Country*. This building formerly housed Avon Books, Hearst Books, *American Druggist*, *Connoisseur*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Motor*, *Motor Boating & Sailing*, *Saturday Mechanic*, and *Science Digest*, and is currently home to *Cosmopolitan*, *CosmoGIRL*, *Country Living*, *Victoria*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Redbook*, and *Yachtsman's Guide* and the Hearst Magazines personnel department.

Description

The A.T. Demarest & Company and Peerless Motor Car Company Buildings, located at the southeast corner of Broadway and West 57th Street, were constructed in 1909 as separate structures, though architecturally harmonious incorporating neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque stylistic references. They were combined internally as an office building for the General Motors Corp. in 1917-19. Nine stories in height (plus a partial tenth story and a two-story tower on the east side), the building is of steel-frame curtain wall construction above concrete piers. It is almost entirely clad in white matt glazed terra cotta (now painted) on the two principal (northern and western)

facades and a (now) partially visible southern facade. The Broadway and 57th Street facades are each articulated horizontally with a two-story base (originally for showrooms), and vertically with five three-bay sections that join in a canted two-bay corner. The building also has a visible, partially articulated eastern facade. The building originally had one-over-one double-hung wood sash windows; some of the original windows survive, while others have been replaced with anodized aluminum. The building formerly carried a large metal framework with automobile advertising signs on the roof and a large vertical neon sign on the Broadway facade.

Base (ground and second stories) The five wide bays of each principal facade are framed with two-story pilasters capped by shield cartouches. The original arrangement of most of the ground-story bays was a tripartite storefront window above a bulkhead (several bays had pedestrian or automobile entrances), surmounted by a tripartite transom and terra-cotta spandrel. The ground-story bulkhead is currently clad with a non-historic granite veneer. The current non-historic single-pane storefront windows are surmounted by non-historic metal spandrels and commercial signage (c. late 1970s). Each bay of the second story originally consisted of a central window flanked by metal mullions and one-over-one windows, above and below painted and riveted steel beams.

57th Street facade: The easternmost ground-story section has five metal and glass entrance doors with a five-pane transom, flanked by bronze plaques with the inscription "Argonaut Building 224 West 57th St". A decorative metal canopy, held by cables anchored to a metal spandrel panel, is located above this. The second section from the east has a non-historic door, vehicle doorway, metal panel and louvers. **Corner:**

The corner entrance originally had two doors with glass panels, a fanlight, and a decorative spandrel panel. There are currently non-historic aluminum and glass doors with a transom, two stone steps, railings, and a rolldown gate surmounted by a non-historic sign panel and a banner pole. The entrance is flanked by buttressed piers with crouching-figure corbels and lion-with-shield finials. The second-story windows have a metal mullion and are surmounted by a painted and riveted steel beam.

Upper Stories (third through ninth stories) Terra-cotta ornament includes continuous pilasters, stylized colonnettes, buttresses, round arches, decorative spandrels, keystones, gargoyles, brackets, dentils, quatrefoil rondels, trefoils, foliation, bosses, corbels, and lion heads. On the second vertical section from the southernmost on the Broadway facade is an oriel on the fifth through seven stories; the top portion of a

cartouche on the balcony parapet bearing the partial letter "P" (for "Peerless") has been removed. The sections of each principal (and southern) facade terminate in pediments flanked by piers [Demarest] or parapets [Peerless]. Finials on the roof parapet above the oriel have been removed.

South Facade This facade, originally fully articulated and visible above the then adjacent church, is clad in terra cotta. Today, only the western two bays of windows are visible above the second story, due to an adjacent apartment building. The westernmost bay originally had slit windows, some of which have been enlarged.

East Facade This mostly ten-story facade is clad in tan brick with terra-cotta trim and is embellished in the center with two-story round-arched window groupings with keyed surrounds with voussoirs and keystones, and spandrel panels. **Tower** The two-story tower at the east end of the building, faced in tan brick with

terra-cotta trim, is embellished with quoined pilasters; corner shields; corbeling; two-story bifurcated round arches on the north and east facades, with keyed surrounds and metal spandrel panels and surmounted by rondels and arches; and, on the west facade, the letters "CORPORATION" surviving from "General Motors Corporation" (similar letters were also formerly located on the east facade; the letters "Peerless" had previously been on the north facade). The upper portion of the western parapet has been removed.

Report prepared by
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NOTES

1. David W. Dunlap, *On Broadway: A Journey Uptown Over Time* (N.Y.: Rizzoli, 1990), 179-200, and "Street of Automotive Dreams," *New York Times* (NYT), July 7, 2000, E1 and 35; *Both Sides of Broadway from Bowling Green to Central Park* (N.Y.: De Leeuw Riehl Publ. Co., 1910).
2. Fremont Rider, *Rider's New York City* (N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1923), 235.
3. "Real Estate and the Automobile Trade," *NYT*, Jan. 6, 1907, V, 22.
4. The U.S. Rubber Co. Building is a designated New York City Landmark.
5. Other early automobile-related businesses on Broadway were the Pope Garage (1905, Townsend, Steinle & Haskell), No. 1733, also the home of Buick Motor Co.; Lozier Motor Co. Building (1905, Francis H. Kimball, demolished), No. 1751; and B.F. Goodrich Tire Co. Building (1909, Howard Van Doren Shaw and Waid & Willauer), No. 1780-1782 (aka 225-227 West 57th Street).
6. "New York a Center of Auto Manufacture," *The Hub* (Dec. 1917), 17.
7. *Ibid*, 17, 19.
8. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; New York City, Dept. of Buildings, Manhattan, Plans, Permits and Dockets (NB 32-1909 and NB 117-1909); "Skyscraper Construction for Automobile Trade," *NYT*, Jan. 24, 1909, 13; "Noteworthy Improvement at Broadway and 57th Street," *NYT*, Jan. 31, 1909, 14; "Two Buildings for Automobile Trade," *Real Estate Record & Guide*, Feb. 20, 1909, 333; Aaron T. Demarest obit., *NYT*, July 14, 1908, 5; William R. Demarest obit., *NYT*, Nov. 24, 1928, 17; Sarah B. Landau and Carl Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper, 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1996) 169, 417; Beverly R. Kimes, "Peerless Motor Car Company," in *Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography: The Automobile Industry, 1896-1920* (EABHB) (N.Y.: Facts on File, 1990), 383-385; Peerless Motor Car Co. of New York, *The New York Home of the Peerless: 1760 Broadway* (N.Y.: Bartlett-Orr Pr., 1910); *New York City Directories* (1903-21).
9. Jan. 31, 1909.

10. Due to the length of the church's nave, much of the south wall of the Peerless building was originally exposed.
11. *Brickbuilder* (Sept. 1909), 196. For information on the N.Y. Architectural Terra Cotta Co. and architectural terra cotta in New York, see: LPC, *Potter Building Designation Report* (LP-1948) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1996), prepared by Jay Shockley.
12. The Bayard-Condict Building is a designated New York City Landmark.
13. National Terra Cotta Society, "The Garage," Architectural Terra Cotta Brochure Series 5 (N.Y.: c.1918-20), 6.
14. "Recent Buildings," *Architects' & Builders' Magazine* (Nov. 1909), 73-75.
15. W.R. Demarest obit.
16. *NYT*, Jan. 31, 1909.
17. The firm name was changed in 1902, and a Cleveland headquarters building was constructed in 1906 (J. Milton Dyer, architect). Robert C. Gaede and Robert Kalin, eds., *Guide to Cleveland Architecture* (Cleveland: Cleveland Chapter, A.I.A., 1991).
18. Kittredge (1871-1932) was president of Peerless from 1906 to 1921, during the company's most successful years. He committed suicide due to financial burdens during the Depression. "Auto Maker Ends Life," *NYT*, Mar. 29, 1932, 24.
19. Peerless Motor Car Co., 3.
20. *Ibid*, 5.
21. *Ibid*, 15. The original interior arrangement had the following departments: stock on the second floor; new cars on the third; used cars on the fourth; inspection on the fifth; upholstery on the sixth; repair on the seventh and eighth; painting on the ninth; and blacksmith shop on the partial tenth floor.
22. *Ibid*, 21.
23. Montgomery Schuyler, "The Works of Francis H. Kimball," *Architectural Record* 7 (Apr.-June 1898), 479-518; "Francis H. Kimball," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (NCAB)* 15 (N.Y.: James T. White & Co., 1916), 79; Record and Guide, *A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York* (N.Y.: Arno Pr., 1967), reprt. of 1898 edit., 698-699; LPC, architects files, *Trinity Building Designation Report* (LP-1557) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1988), prepared by Elisa Urbanelli, and *J. & W. Seligman & Co. Building Designation Report* (LP-1943) and *Empire Building Designation Report* (LP-1933)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1996), both prepared by Jay Shockley; Andrew S. Dolkart, *Lower Manhattan Architectural Survey Report* (N.Y.: Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, 1988); "F.H. Kimball A Bankrupt," *NYT*, Apr. 4, 1917, 20.
24. This was aside from a brief partnership with Henry S. Ihnen in 1886. Their firm designed a notable warehouse at 135 Hudson Street for Edward M. Cary in 1886-87, now located within the Tribeca West Historic District.
25. Emmanuel Baptist Church is a designated New York City Landmark and the Montauk Club is located within the Park Slope Historic District.
26. The Waldo Mansion and Standard Oil and Empire Buildings are designated New York City Landmarks. A portion of the firm's design for Standard Oil is still visible on the New Street elevation.
27. The Trinity and U.S. Realty and Seligman Co. Buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.
28. Kimball obit., *NYT*, Dec. 29, 1919, 9.
29. Purdy obit., *NYT*, Dec. 28, 1944, 19; "Corydon Tyler Purdy," *Who's Who in America* 11 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co., 1920), 2315, and *NCAB* 12 (1904), 96-97; "Lightner Henderson," *NCAB* 17 (1920), 172; Carl W. Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area, 1875-1925* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1964); LPC, *Starrett-Lehigh Building Designation Report* (LP-1295)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1986), prepared by Jay Shockley; Landau and Condit.

30. The Broadway-Chambers, Flatiron, and Whitehall Buildings, Plaza Hotel, Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. Tower, and Municipal and Starrett-Lehigh Buildings are designated New York City Landmarks. Outside of New York, the firm's important structural commissions included the Willard Hotel (1900-01, Henry J. Hardenbergh), Washington, D.C.; Wabash-Pittsburgh Terminal Railway Station (1902-04, Theodore C. Link, demolished), Pittsburgh; Congress Hotel additions (1902, 1907, Holabird & Roche) and Hotel Lasalle (1908-09, Holabird & Roche), Chicago; and the Capital (1912-28) and Hotel Nacional (1930, McKim, Mead & White), Havana.
31. LPC, *Fuller Building Designation Report* (LP-1460) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1986), prepared by Virginia Kurshan.
32. The U.S. General Post Office is a designated New York City Landmark.
33. "William Crapo Durant," *American National Biography* 7 (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1999), 148-150, and *NCAB* 36 (1950), 16-17; Bernard A. Weissberger, *The Dream Maker: William C. Durant, Founder of General Motors* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1979), and "William Crapo Durant" in (*EABHB*), 151-162; "General Motors Corporation," *International Directory of Company Histories (IDCH)* 1 (Chicago: St. James Pr., 1988), 171-173; Karl Ludvigsen and David B. Wise, "Chevrolet" and "General Motors" in *Encyclopedia of the American Automobile* (London: Orbis Publ., 1977), 36-38 and 91-98; George S. May, "Chevrolet Motor Car Company" and "General Motors Corporation" in (*EABHB*), 96-97 and 234-237; Arthur Pound, *The Turning Wheel: The Story of General Motors Through Twenty-five Years, 1908-1933* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 1934); Ed Cram, *Chrome Colossus: General Motors and Its Times* (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1980); General Motors Corp., *General Motors: The First 75 Years* (N.Y.: Crown Publr., Inc., 1983); "Chevrolet Company to Wind Up Affairs," *NYT*, Feb. 22, 1918, 15.
34. Pound, 148. Durant had previously, around 1903-05, spent much of his time in New York City, due in part to an estrangement from his wife and a desire to speculate in the stock market. Chevrolet by 1914 operated five assembly plants, including the former Maxwell-Briscoe plant in Tarrytown, New York, and six regional sales offices.
35. These included the Hyatt Roller Bearing Co., McLaughlin Motor Co. of Canada, Remy Electric Co., New Departure Ball Bearing Co., Fisher Body Co., and Dayton Engineering Laboratories Co. (Delco). Among General Motors' subsidiaries, the General Motors Export Co. (established 1911) sold General Motors products overseas, while the General Motors Acceptance Corp. financed installment buying. Another profitable acquisition, seemingly unrelated to automobiles, was the Guardian Frigerator Co. (changed to Frigidaire), and the corporation also began purchasing a number of aviation companies.
36. NYC (Alts. 2609-1917 and 449-1919); N.Y. County; *New York City Directories* (1915-33); *Manhattan Address Directories* (1929-75); General Motors Corp., *Report* (1917-33); "Broadway Building Nears Completion," *NYT*, Apr. 10, 1927, II, 6.
37. A city directory in 1917 lists Demarest & Co., automobile repairs, at 521 East 57th Street, and Peerless Motor Car Co. at 1896 Broadway.
38. The existing automobile and passenger elevators and an internal staircase were removed in 1917-19 and three new passenger elevators were installed.
39. General Motors, *Report* (1920), 8-9.
40. "General Motors in Realty," *NYT*, July 30, 1927, 19.
41. In 1935, General Motors had re-installed elevators for transporting cars between showrooms located in the basement and on the first through third floors. The second and third floors were converted back to offices in 1964, though the ground story remained in use for automobile showrooms into the late 1970s.
42. N.Y. County; "Hearst Corporation," *IDCH* 4 (1991), 625-627; LPC, *Hearst Magazine Building Designation Report* (LP-1625)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1988), prepared by Janet Adams; *Manhattan Address Directories* (1970-93); *Manhattan Telephone Directory* (2001).

43. A new General Motors Building (1968, Edward Durell Stone, Emery Roth & Sons) was constructed at 767 Fifth Avenue.
44. This building is a designated New York City Landmark.

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 A.T. Demarest & Company and Peerless Motor Car Company Buildings (later General Motors Corporation 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 A.T. Demarest & Company and Peerless Motor Car Company Buildings, located in the heart of the “Automobile Row” section of Broadway in Manhattan, were used by the automobile industry for over six decades; that they were constructed in 1909 to the designs of eminent architect Francis H. Kimball, who had emerged in the forefront of early skyscraper design in New York City particularly during his collaboration with G. Kramer Thompson in 1892-98, in collaboration with consulting engineer Purdy & Henderson and George A. Fuller Co., builders; that A.T. Demarest & Co., started in 1860 by Aaron T. Demarest, was a carriage manufacturer that also ventured into the production of automobile bodies around 1902, while the Peerless Motor Car Co. of New York was a branch of the Cleveland luxury automobile manufacturing firm; that though architecturally harmonious, incorporating neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque stylistic references, and designed to relate to the mammoth neo-Gothic style Broadway Tabernacle then located next door to the south, the two buildings were constructed separately for these firms, with the L-shaped-in-plan Peerless building wrapping around the corner Demarest building, and have subtly different ornamental schemes; that Kimball employed the technology of contemporary skyscrapers for these buildings, which are both nine stories in height (plus a partial tenth story and two-story tower on the Peerless building) and of steel-frame curtain wall construction above concrete piers; that they are almost entirely clad on the principal facades in white matt glazed terra cotta (now painted) manufactured by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., the only major architectural terra cotta firm in New York City, and that this represents an early and significant use of terra-cotta cladding for tall buildings in New York; that these buildings had ground-story automobile and carriage showrooms (among the earliest surviving in New York), with repair shops and warerooms above; that both structures were acquired in 1918 and combined into one office building by the recently-formed General Motors Corporation for its initial major corporate headquarters; and that the building was used by General Motors for over fifty years, until its purchase in 1977 by the Hearst Corporation to house offices of its Hearst Magazines division.

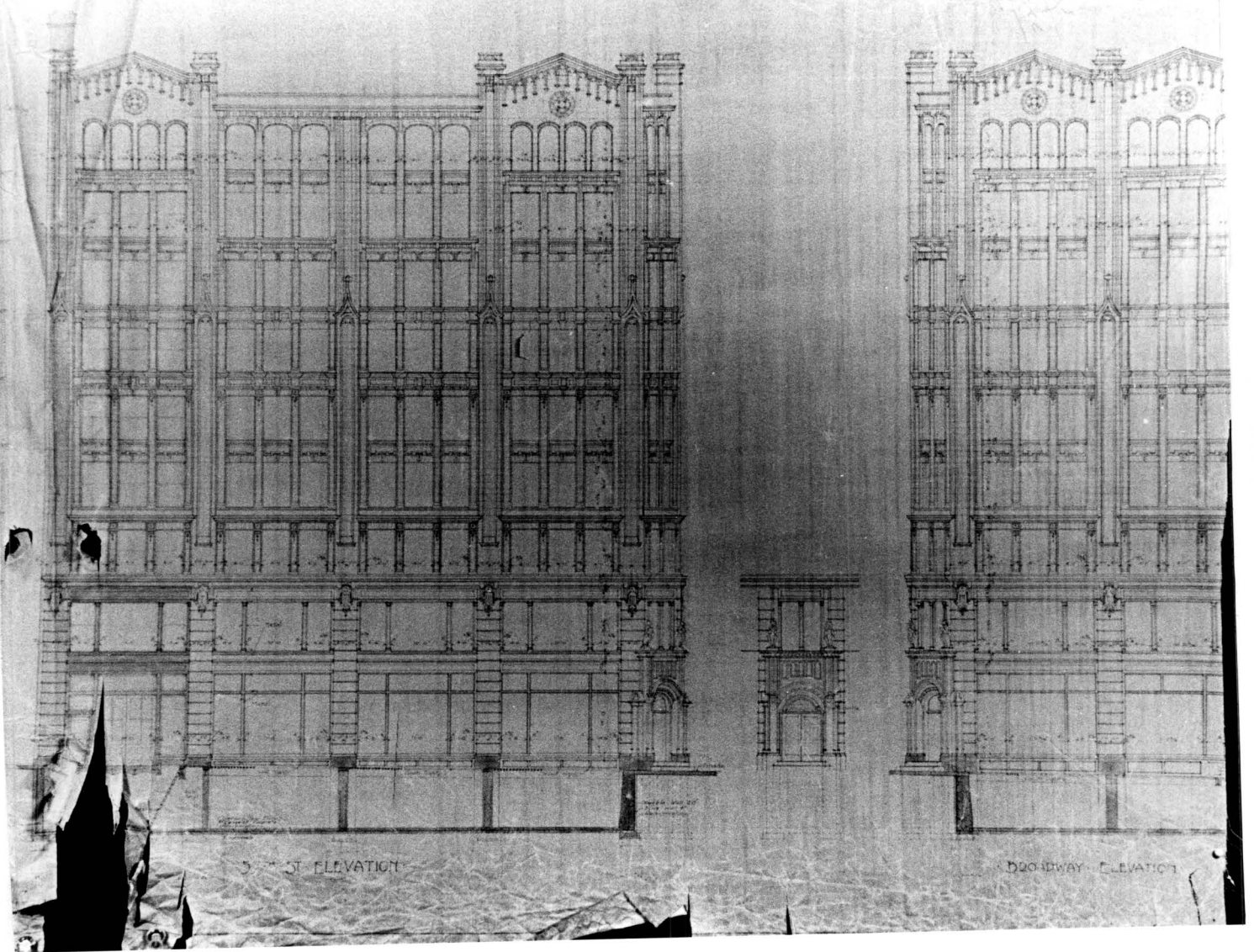
Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the A.T Demarest & Company and Peerless Motor Car Company Buildings (later General Motors Corporation Building), 224-228 West 57th Street (aka 1758-1770 Broadway), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 1028, Lot 47, as its Landmark Site.



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings

Source: *Both Sides of Broadway from Bowling Green to Central Park* (1910)

A. T. DEMAREST AND CO.



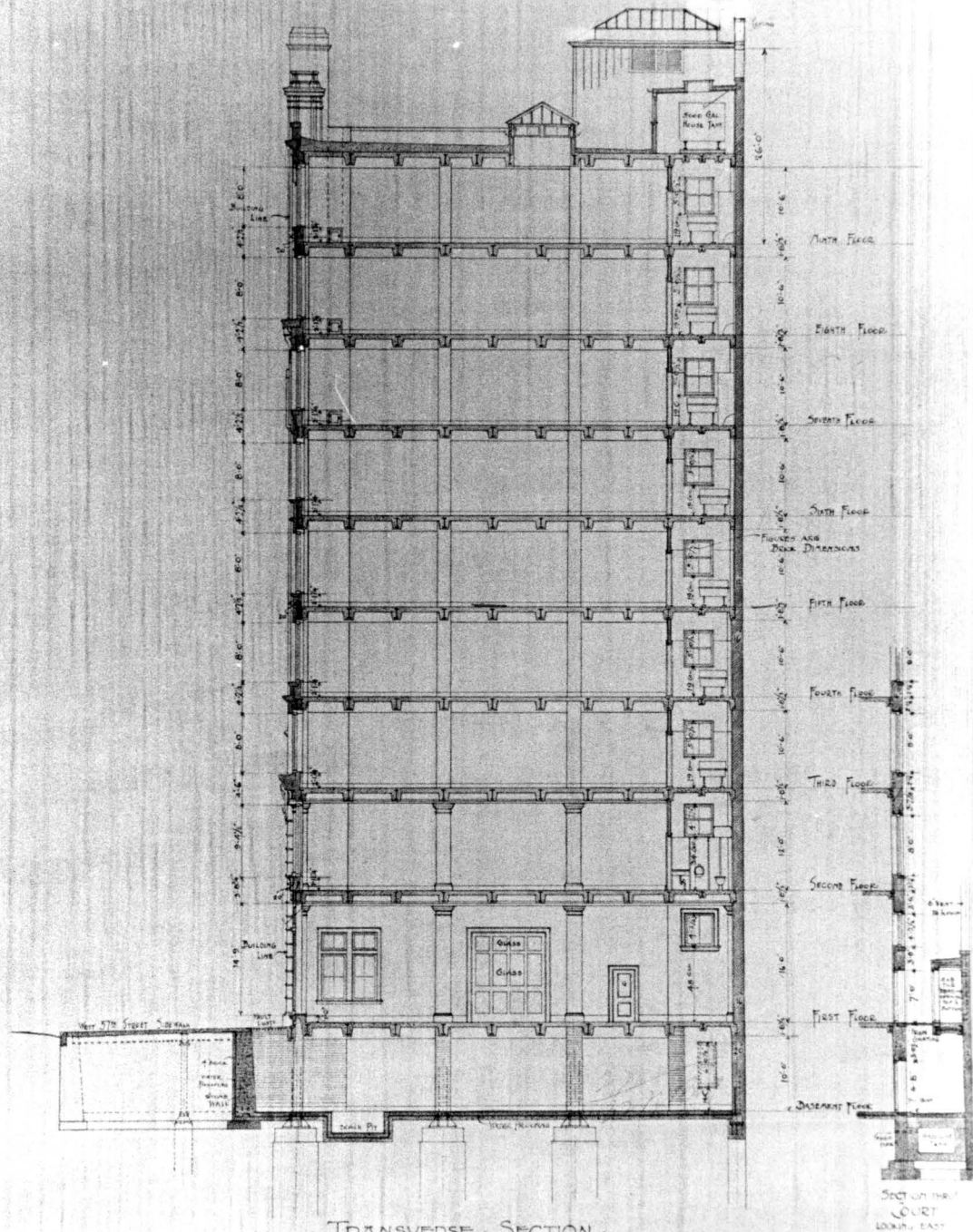
Drawing of A.T. Demarest & Co. Building, Francis H. Kimball
Source: New York City, Dept. of Buildings



Rendering of A.T. Demarest & Co. Building, Francis H. Kimball
Source: *Real Estate Record & Guide*, Feb. 20, 1909

REMISES - S.E. CORNER, BROADWAY AND 57TH STREET.
 - ISLAND REALTY CO.
 FOR MESSRS. A.T. DEMAREST AND CO. - GARAGE.

13
 REC 909



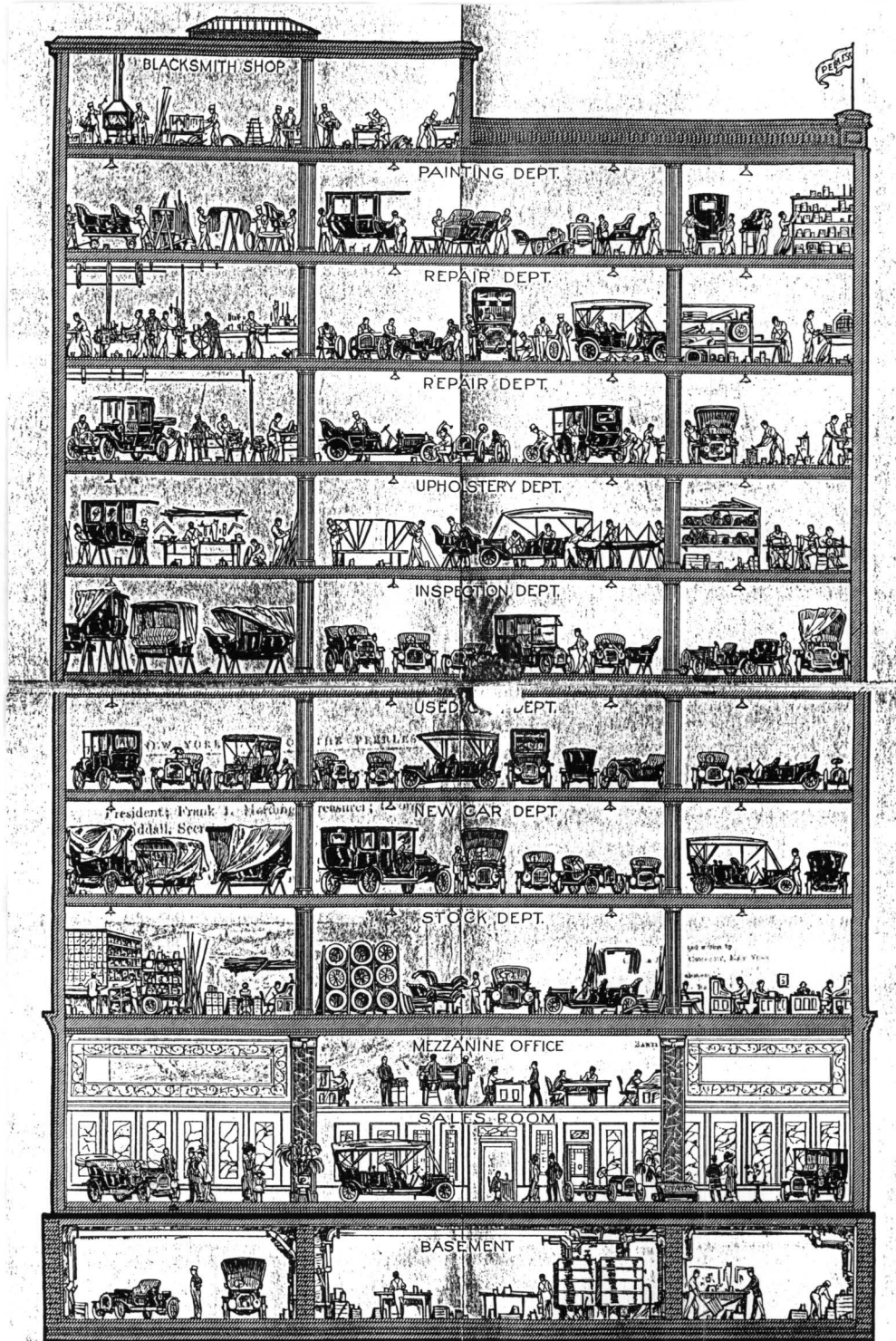
TRANSVERSE SECTION

FRANCIS H. KIMBALL

Drawing of A.T. Demarest & Co. Building framing, Francis H. Kimball
 Source: New York City, Dept. of Buildings



Rendering of Peerless Motor Car Co. Building, Francis H. Kimball
Source: *Real Estate Record & Guide*, Feb. 20, 1909



Peerless Motor Car Co. Building, interior arrangement

Source: *The New York Home of the Peerless: 1760 Broadway* (1910)



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
Source: N.Y.C. Department of Taxes (c. 1938-40), N.Y.C. Municipal Archives



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
West 57th Street facade

Photo: Carl Forster



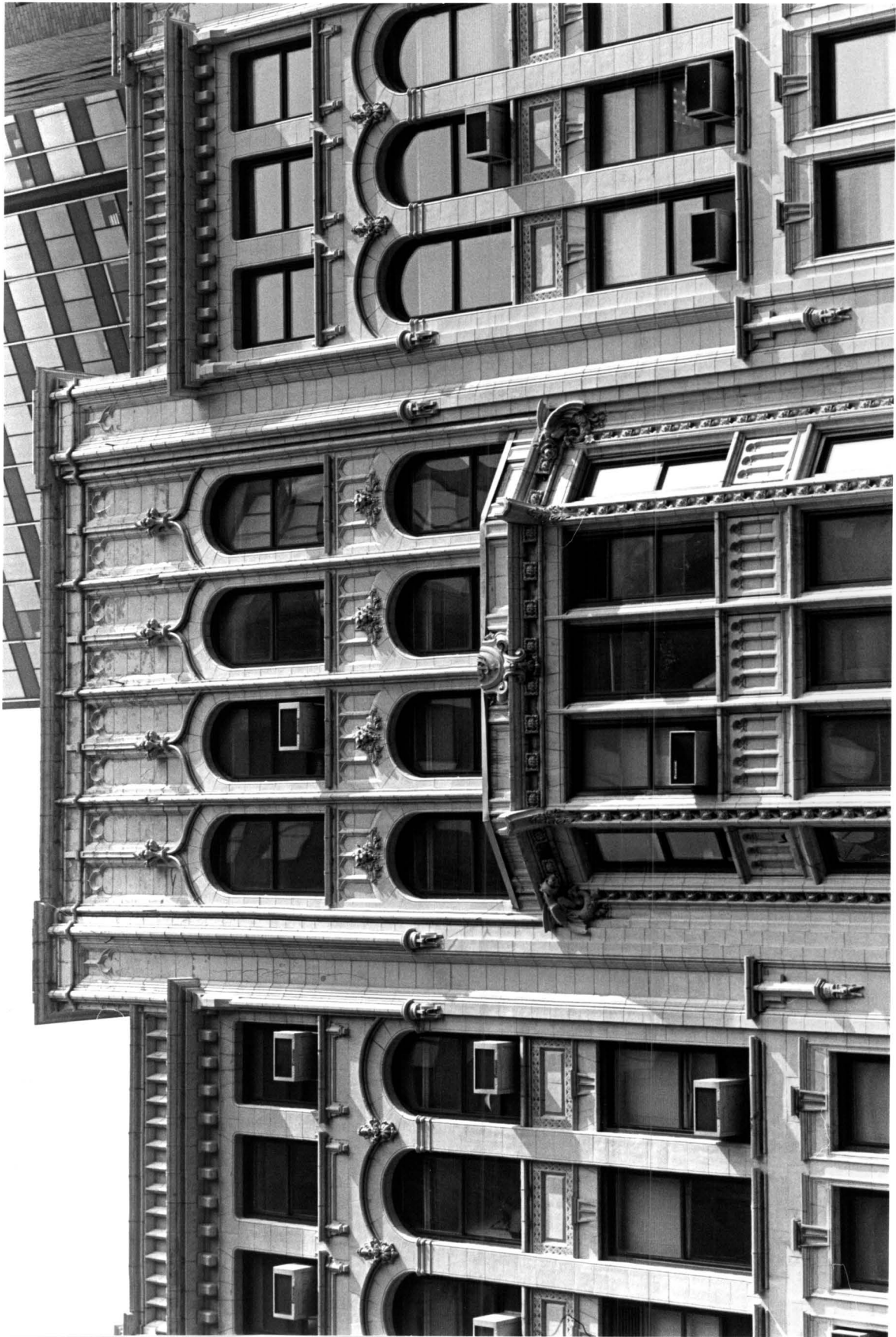
A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
Broadway facade

Photo: Carl Forster



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
Broadway facade detail

Photo: Carl Forster



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
Broadway facade detail

Photo: Carl Forster



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
Broadway facade oriel detail

Photo: Carl Forster



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
 West 57th Street entrance (left) and Corner entrance (right) Photos: Carl Forster



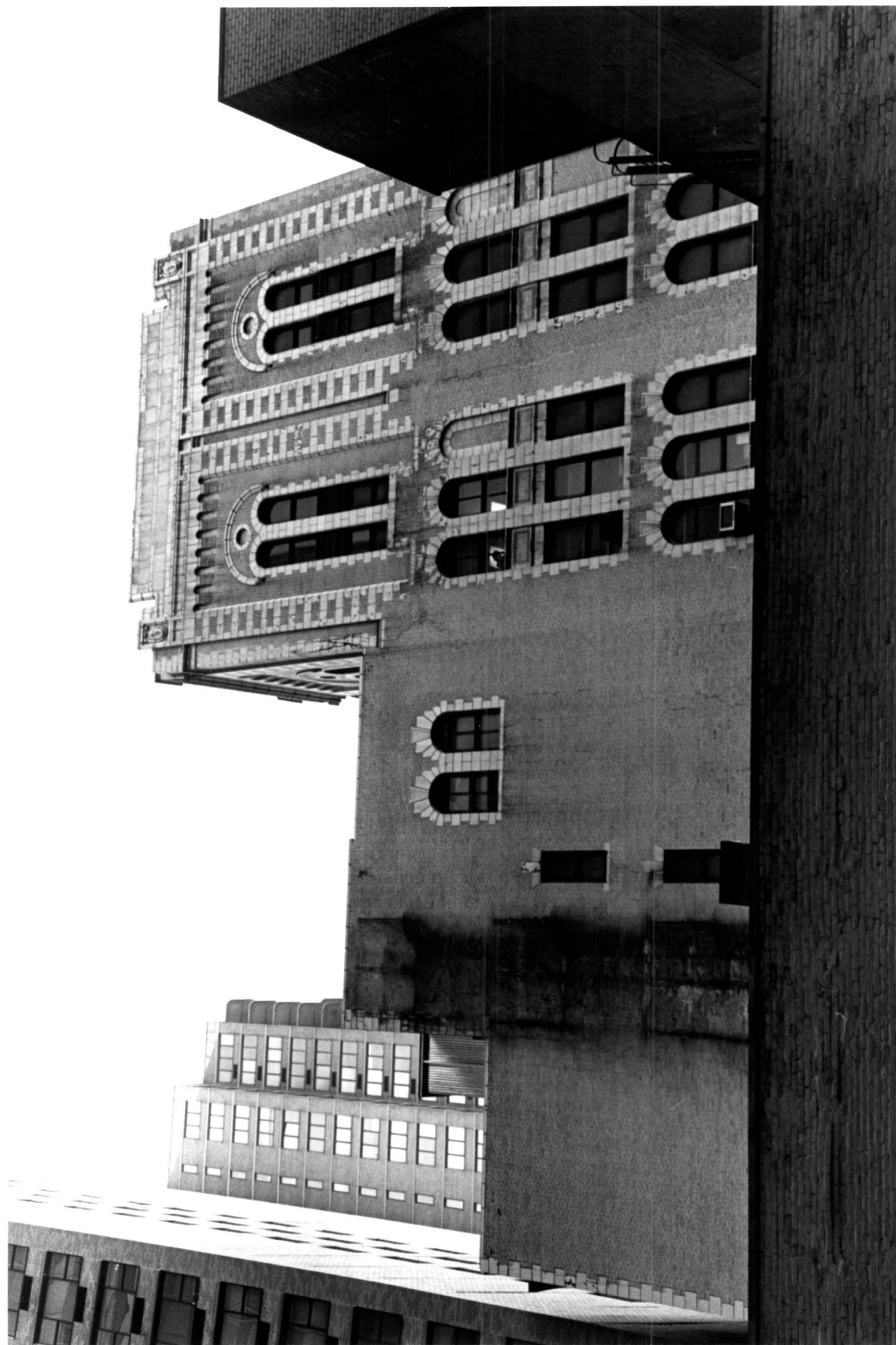
A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
South facade

Photo: Carl Forster



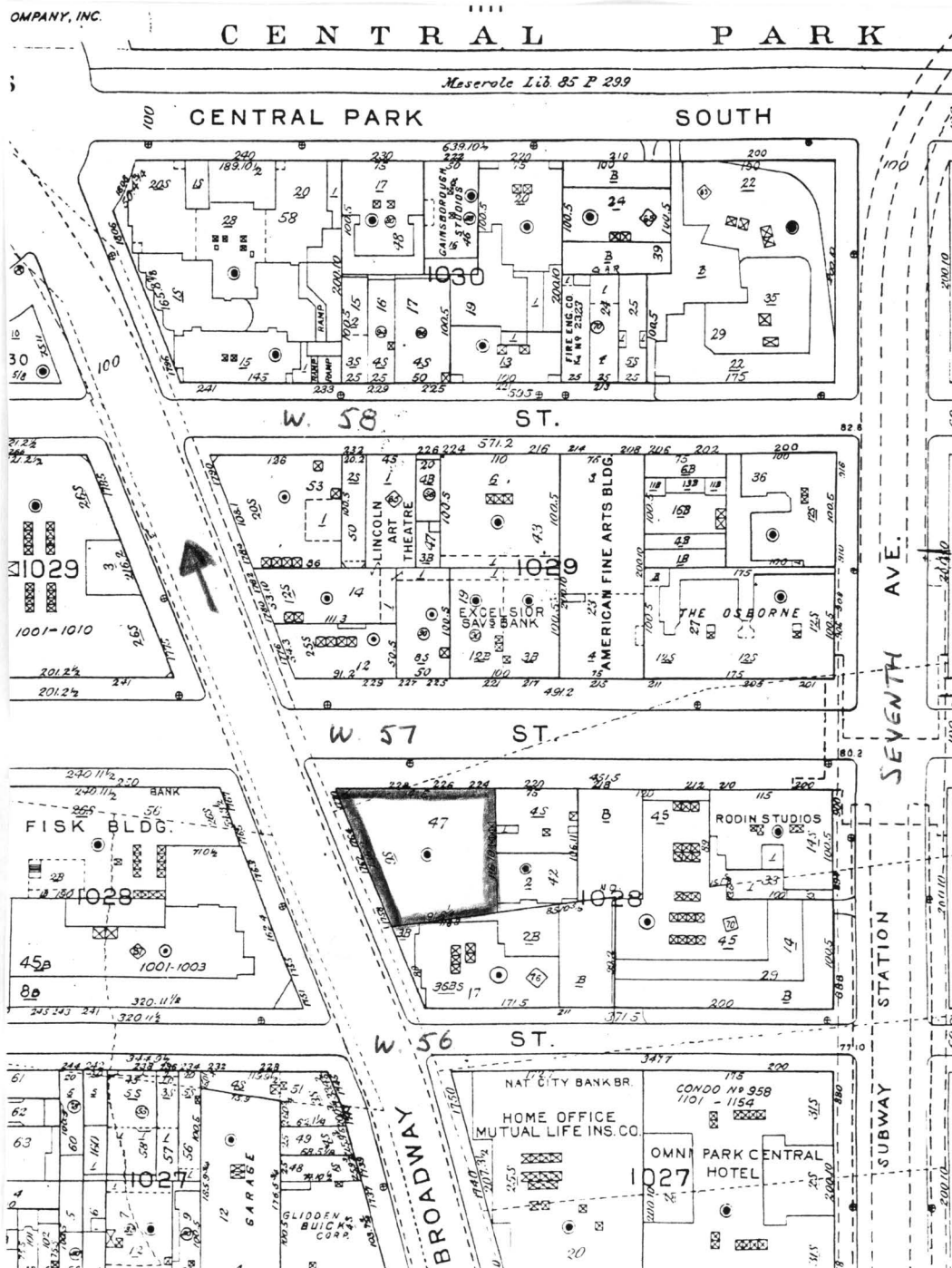
A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
Tower details

Photos: Carl Forster

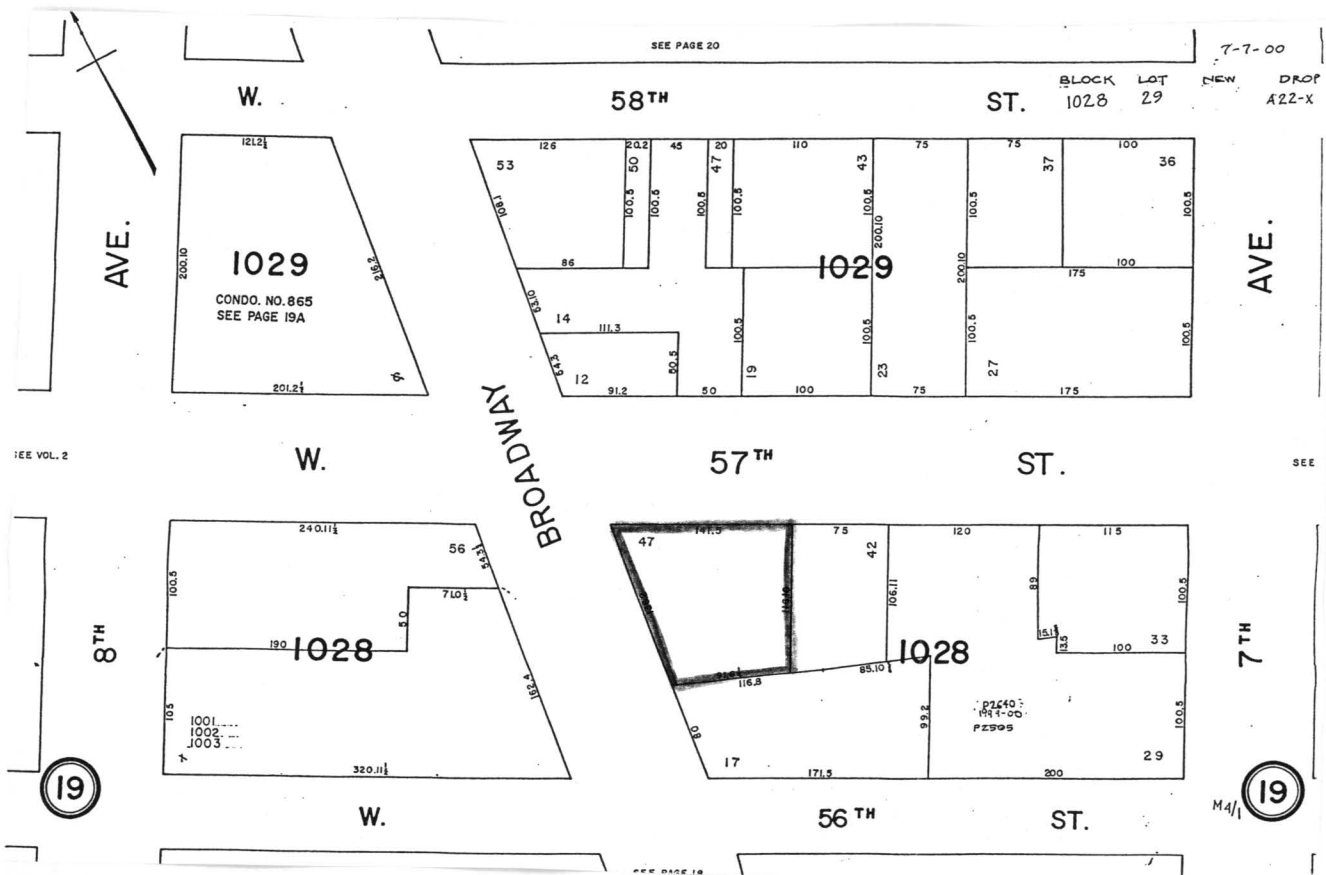


A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
East facade

Photo: Carl Forster



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
 Source: Sanborn, *Manhattan Land Book* (1999-2000), pl. 82



A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (later General Motors Corp. Building)
 Landmark Site: Manhattan Tax Map Block 1028, Lot 47
 Source: Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map