

Landmarks Preservation Commission
December 13, 2016, Designation List 492
LP-0735

BERGDORF GOODMAN, 754 Fifth Avenue (aka 2 West 58th Street), Manhattan.
Built 1927-1928; Architects Buchman & Kahn.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1273, Lot 33.

On June 23, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Bergdorf Goodman and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 41). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with provisions of law. The building's owner requested a continuance. The public hearing was continued on July 21, 1970 (Item No. 15) at which time the owner and a representative of the owner spoke in opposition.

On November 5, 2015, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a special public hearing on Backlog Initiative items in the Borough of Manhattan, including Bergdorf Goodman and the related Landmark Site (Item No. II—Borough of Manhattan Group, B). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Four people testified in opposition on behalf of the owner. Nine people testified in favor of designation, including a representative of Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, Borough President Gale Brewer, and representatives from the Society for the Architecture of the City, Save Harlem Now!, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, and two individuals from Community Board Five. The Commission also received written submissions expressing support for designation from Senator Liz Krueger, Landmark West!, and sixteen individuals.

Statements about support for Bergdorf Goodman during the backlog process reflect specific testimony given or submitted during the hearing or while the record was open. In addition, the Commission received numerous more general communications about the backlog that were directed at all items on the backlog. These items were not specifically submitted while the record was open. Due to the volume and variety of these more general emails, they are not tallied for individual buildings.



Summary

Located at the southern end of Manhattan's Grand Army Plaza, 754 Fifth Avenue occupies one of the most prominent sites along the Fifth Avenue retail corridor. The building, designed by the preeminent designer Ely Jacques Kahn, is an excellent example of Modern Classical design and is significant for its associations with Bergdorf Goodman, one of New York City's premier retail establishments.

The site, which was the former location of Cornelius Vanderbilt II's mansion, was purchased by the real estate developer Frederick Brown in 1926. Brown developed the site from 1927-1928 to read as separate, but aesthetically unified, buildings. Ely Jacques Kahn, one of the most important New York architects of the 20th century, designed the buildings in the Modern Classical style. His design incorporated classicizing elements of French architecture and harmonized with the other buildings on the Grand Army Plaza.

Bergdorf Goodman, one of New York City's most celebrated department stores, was an original tenant. Their store, which originally began as a tailor shop at Fifth Avenue and 19th Street, revolutionized the women's clothing industry by becoming the first American couturier to offer ready-to-wear clothing. Like many other stores, it followed the retail migration north along Fifth Avenue, ultimately occupying the site's northernmost building on 58th Street and Fifth Avenue. The new location proved to be a great success. Bergdorf Goodman began to expand, first by leasing additional space in the complex and later by purchasing all of the buildings on the site.

Today, Bergdorf Goodman occupies all but the southeast corner of the complex, which is leased to Van Cleef & Arpels. Alterations to the first two stories have sought to unify the facade, reflecting the success of Bergdorf Goodman. Buchman and Kahn's original design remains largely intact above the second story and continues to read as separate, but aesthetically unified, buildings. Bergdorf Goodman serves as an important backdrop to the Grand Army Plaza and is significant for its associations with Ely Jacques Kahn, Bergdorf Goodman, and its role in the commercial development of Fifth Avenue.

DESCRIPTION

Occupying an irregularly shaped lot in the eastern portion of the block between West 57th Street and West 58th Street on Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman was originally designed by Ely Jacques Kahn to read as seven separate, but aesthetically unified, buildings. Each of the seven buildings was designed with at least one facade facing Fifth Avenue (the original design included an eighth building in plan, but this building was not expressed on the exterior). Over the years, the first two stories along Fifth Avenue have been substantially altered to produce a more unified facade. Above the second story, Kahn's original design remains intact with the outer buildings on Fifth Avenue forming two large terminal pavilions, and the intervening buildings arranged in a symmetrical A-B-C-B-A pattern. The buildings are clad in South Dover white marble and have slate mansard roofs. The buildings feature casement windows at the second story and double-hung windows at the third through eighth stories. In 2003, the windows, with the exception of those on the north facade of the ninth floor, were replaced with aluminum windows that match the profile and configuration of the original windows.¹ The exterior light fixtures are not original.

West 58th Street (North) facade

Historic: Rusticated two-story base above granite water table; central round-arch portal set off by green marble facings; concave metal-and-glass sidelights and transom with bronze female bust in bas-relief frame a revolving door; arch is capped by slender projecting marble balcony with ornamental wrought-iron railing supported by stylized brackets with floral pendants and a cartouche with carved foliage; second-story balcony window features elaborately carved stone enframement; openings of original show windows remain; five center bays consist of windows arranged in groups of three and are framed by single windows in outer bays; band course below third- and eighth-story windows; stone denticulated cornice between the eighth and ninth story; projecting marble window sills at second and fourth through seventh stories; seven masonry dormers at ninth story: outer dormers have triangular pediments and feature one window and five center dormers have arched pediments and feature ornamental panels above coupled windows.

Alterations: Westernmost seventh-story window has been altered to include a vent; ninth-story six-over-six attic windows replaced with single-pane windows; four of five original ground floor show windows replaced within historic opening; infill at westernmost show window; integral awnings at display windows; non-historic doors at western entrance; roll down gate; canopy removed from main store entrance; security cameras; conduit; light fixtures; signage lettering (signage is visible in its current location either side of the entrance in early photographs); two westernmost openings at ground floor have been enlarged and modified.²

Fifth Avenue (East) facade

Northern Pavilion

Historic: The nine-story northern pavilion at the corner of West 58th Street and Fifth Avenue was originally occupied by Bergdorf Goodman. Its Fifth Avenue facade features: rusticated two-story base above granite watertable; round-arch entrance with an ornamental panel featuring two winged putti; doorway is set between two rectangular display windows with integral awnings; windows grouped in a 1-3-1 pattern from the second through eighth stories; stone denticulated cornice between the eighth and ninth stories; dormer with arched pediment featuring an ornamental panel above coupled windows; projecting marble window sills at second and fourth through seventh stories.

Alterations: Historic canopy removed from main store entrance; fire hose connector; security camera; revolving door and surrounding infill below transom; non-historic light fixtures; signage

lettering (signage is visible in its current location either side of the entrance in early photographs).

Southern Pavilion

Historic: Nine-story southern pavilion at the corner of West 57th Street and Fifth Avenue is currently occupied by Van Cleef & Arpels at the ground story. Historic features include stonework above entry with oval window set within carved drapery; windows grouped in a 1-3-1 pattern second through eighth stories; band course below third- and eighth-story windows; stone denticulated cornice between the eighth and ninth stories; dormer with arched pediment at the ninth story featuring an ornamental panel above coupled windows; projecting marble window sills at second and fourth through seventh stories; flagpole above center second-story window.

Alterations: Most of ground-story stonework has been replaced, with the exception of the stonework above the entrance; round-arched display windows on either side of entry; canopy removed from main entrance; plaques and signage lettering; entry infill; light fixtures.

Five Center Buildings

The upper stories of the intervening buildings are arranged in a symmetrical A-B-C-B-A pattern.

Alterations: The bottom two-stories were replaced by the architect Allan Greenberg from 1984-1985 with the intention of creating a unified façade. Other alterations include signage lettering for different tenants and a non-historic large sign plaque above main entrance.

“A” Design

Historic: Six stories and three bays wide; two three-story pilasters terminating in a stone entablature articulate the third through fifth stories; recessed metal spandrels between the third and fourth stories; two stone palmette reliefs on spandrel between fourth and fifth story; sixth story features three double-hung six-over-six windows; center window is set within a round arch that features an ornamental panel; segmental-arched pediment above the sixth story recalls the ninth-story dormers on the southern and northern pavilions.

“B” Design

Historic: Six stories and three bays wide; sixth-story center window is set within a round arch that features an ornamental panel; band courses between second and third story and fifth and sixth story; projecting sills at fourth and fifth story windows; segmental-arched pediment above the sixth story recalls the ninth-story dormers on the southern and northern pavilions.

“C” Design

Historic: Six stories; facade projects slightly above the second story; windows grouped in a 1-3-1 pattern; projecting sills on fourth and fifth story; band course below sixth story windows; center windows at sixth story are set within blind round arches and share a shallow decorative stone balcony with wrought iron railing; decorative stone panels above the outer bays at the sixth story; three decorative stone panels located directly below the cornice at the top of the sixth story.

West 57th Street (South) facade

Historic: Asymmetrical facade arrangement with second- through- eighth story windows organized, from west to east, in three groups of three windows, followed by a bay of paired windows with an entrance below, followed by five evenly spaced, individual window bays (western windows have been filled); stone denticulated cornice between the eighth and ninth stories; shallow, decorative stone balcony with wrought-iron railing at westernmost three windows on the seventh story; stone parapet with urns and three recessed decorative panels above three westernmost eighth-story windows; two decorative panels in bas-relief at the second

story; the western service entrance openings are historic; projecting marble window sills at second and fourth through seventh story.

Alterations: First story heavily altered; display windows do not match the original window openings in size or configuration; entrance has been enlarged and redesigned to match the entrance on West 58th Street; non-historic service entry doors and transom; replacement marble at most of the first story; westernmost window opening on each story have been filled; light fixtures at first story; lettering and illuminated signage; awnings; plaques; security cameras and conduit; louvers in upper panes of four second-story windows and westernmost fourth-story window; metal brackets at the corner of the third and sixth story; light fixtures at roof.

Roof

Historic: Slate mansard roof with copper trim; stone partitions on the roof separating each section of the Fifth Avenue facade.

Alterations: Brick rooftop addition visible from Fifth Avenue on the four southern buildings, fronted by a sloped glass enclosure over the southern three buildings, and connected to the northern pavilion by a metal-clad enclosure; rooftop mechanicals; guard rails on edge of pavilions.

SITE HISTORY

The Commercial Development of Fifth Avenue³

For most of the 19th century, successive portions of Fifth Avenue enjoyed the reputation of being New York's most prestigious residential enclave. As the avenue was developed northward from Washington Square, its character reflected the growth and change of Manhattan, with newer northerly residential sections followed closely by commercial redevelopment. After the Civil War, Fifth Avenue between 42nd and 59th Streets was built up with town houses and mansions for New York's elite. These included the residences of William Kissam Vanderbilt, between 51st and 52nd Streets, Cornelius Vanderbilt II at the northwest corner of 57th Street, and John D. Rockefeller at 4 West 54th Street. The neighborhood remained residential for only a short time as commercial development continued to push the wealthy further north into the Upper East Side.⁴

Small shops took over the lower floors of brownstones only to be replaced by a growing number of purpose-built commercial buildings. As the commercial center of Manhattan gradually moved uptown, so did the department stores. In 1906, B. Altman & Company, one of the city's major department stores, set in motion Fifth Avenue's transformation into the city's premier shopping boulevard when it moved from Sixth Avenue between 18th and 19th Streets to new headquarters on Fifth Avenue between 34th and 35th Streets.⁵ Other department stores followed including Lord & Taylor, which moved to Fifth Avenue between 38th and 39th Street in 1913-14, and Saks Fifth Avenue, which constructed a new store on Fifth Avenue between 49th and 50th Streets, in 1922-1924.

In March, 1913, an article in the *New York Times* noted that "The passing away of the old residences which once graced that part of the avenue with a fashionable dignity no longer excites surprise."⁶ An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* from January of 1926 noted that only 15 houses between 25th and 59th Streets were still used as residences and that "towering office buildings and hotels, and blocks of fashionable shops have displaced the 'brownstone fronts.'"⁷ By the 1920s, the Cornelius Vanderbilt II mansion was one of the few residences remaining on Fifth Avenue. The construction of buildings such as the twenty-six story Heckscher Building,

which had been constructed in 1921 and towered over the Vanderbilt mansion at the southwest corner of 57th Street and Fifth Avenue, had rendered the neighborhood unrecognizable.⁸ Faced with a rapidly changing neighborhood and burdensome property taxes, Cornelius Vanderbilt's widow, Alice G. Vanderbilt, put the mansion up for sale.⁹ In 1925, a syndicate led by Maurice Heckscher agreed to purchase the Vanderbilt property for \$7.1 million and filed plans in December 1925 with the Department of Buildings for a 42-story apartment hotel. Originally envisioned at 55 stories, the project was reduced by 13 stories at the behest of the bank financing the project, but it was still reported that it would be the tallest hotel building in the world; however, Heckscher withdrew from the syndicate, which failed to complete the agreed payment for the property. Members of the syndicate attempted to revive the bid, with a plan for a 42-story office building to be designed by J.R. Carpenter. After a legal tangle, the site was ultimately purchased by Frederick Brown, one of New York City's major real estate developers, in June, 1926.¹⁰

Frederick Brown and the Construction of Bergdorf Goodman¹¹

Frederick Brown was born in Pilsen, Austria and immigrated to Paterson, New Jersey in 1888. He entered the New York real estate business in 1898, and by the end of his career, his real estate transactions in Manhattan were valued at more than two billion dollars.¹² "Properties Mr. Brown bought for investment or resale included whole blocks on Park and Fifth Avenues and on Central Park West, sites on Wall Street and elsewhere in the financial district and some of the most valuable business sites in midtown."¹³ He was involved in assembling the sites for Macy's and Saks-Fifth Avenue, the Sherry Netherland and Savoy-Plaza Hotels, the Lincoln Building, and the Eldorado Apartments.¹⁴ Brown was a noted philanthropist who made major donations to the Federation for the Support of Jewish Societies and the Hospital for Joint Diseases. He was also very active in the American Arbitration Association and received the Association's Gold Medal for promoting Commercial Peace in March 1930.

Buchman & Kahn received the commission for the project through the contractor G. Richard Davis, who was a close friend of Edwin Goodman. Davis had been involved in the construction of two of Buchman & Kahn's previous buildings, 15-19 West 39th Street and the Furniture Exchange building.¹⁵ Buchman & Kahn was a logical choice for the job as Ely Jacques Kahn had previously worked on well-known department store projects such as Saks, Bonwit Teller, and Bloomingdale's.¹⁶

Ely Jacques Kahn (1884-1972)¹⁷

Ely Jacques Kahn was one of the most important New York architects of the 20th century. His career, which spanned fifty years, redefined Manhattan's Garment District and resulted in the construction of some of New York City's most significant buildings, including the Holland Plaza Building, 2 Park Avenue Building, and the Municipal Asphalt Plant, all designated New York City Landmarks. Ely Jacques Kahn was considered one of New York's leading modernists, "a robust leader in contemporary building principles and practice," and "the pre-eminent architect of office buildings in the '20's."¹⁸ While he is best known for his work in the Art Deco style and his designs of loft buildings, over his career, Kahn worked in a variety of styles and designed a wide range of buildings including hospitals, houses, office buildings, warehouses, apartment buildings, factories, and department stores.

Ely Jacques Kahn was born into an educated middle-class family in New York. He was always interested in art, and particularly painting, but decided that architecture was a more

practical vocation. In 1903, Kahn began his architectural studies at Columbia College, where design courses were taught in ateliers directed by practicing architects. Kahn enrolled in the atelier of Thomas Hastings. After completing his thesis work, Kahn left for Paris in 1907 to attend the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. There, he joined the atelier of Gaston Redon, who had built a reputation as a painter and master of architectural decoration. Kahn was the first American student to be awarded the “Prix Laberre” at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He earned his diploma in 1911.

Upon his return to the United States, Kahn worked as a draftsman in several different architectural offices, helping to design traditionally styled houses and hotels. In 1915, he was appointed to a teaching position at Cornell University. During this time, Kahn was introduced to Albert Buchman and Mortimer J. Fox, partners in the long-established firm of Buchman & Fox. In 1917, Kahn was invited to join the firm as a partner to succeed Mortimer J. Fox, who was retiring. The name of the firm was changed to Buchman & Kahn. Buchman withdrew into the background, and Kahn was given a leading roll both in the design and business end of the partnership. During this period, the firm’s major works included 2 Park Avenue Building (1926-1928), Bergdorf Goodman (1927-1928), and the Film Center Building (1928-1929).

In 1925, Kahn visited the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris. This was the first international exposition of decorative and industrial arts that required designs of “new inspiration and real originality,” and prohibited reproduction or derivations of historic styles.¹⁹ The ideas presented at the Exposition would be integrated into a new style of architecture, in America, which incorporated bold colors, strong geometric patterns, and combined traditional craft motifs with Machine Age imagery and materials. The style became known as Art Deco.²⁰ Kahn later described his experience at the exposition as an “awakening,” and it influenced much of his subsequent work.²¹ Kahn helped publicize and popularize the new type of design. In 1928 and again in 1934 and 1940, Kahn participated in an exhibit entitled “the Architect and the Industrial Arts,” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, along with others such as Raymond Hood, Ralph Walker, Eliel Saarinen and John Root. Kahn worked with many of these same architects on the Chicago World’s Fair of 1933, for which he designed the pavilion and exhibit of Industrial Arts. During this same period Kahn was involved with the planning and mounting of several of the annual exhibits of the Architectural League in New York.

Upon Buchman’s retirement in 1929, Kahn took complete control of the firm, changing its name to Ely Jacques Kahn, Architects. The onset of the Great Depression meant that there were few new buildings being erected during the 1930s. Kahn traveled around the United States and the Far East conducting a survey of art and architecture education for the Carnegie Corporation. This resulted in the publication of a book, *Design in Art and Industry* (1935), describing his impressions. It was during this period that he helped found and directed the architecture department of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in New York.

In 1940, Kahn took another partner, Robert Jacobs, and the firm’s name was changed to Kahn & Jacobs. Jacobs was a great admirer of Le Corbusier, and the firm began designing housing and commercial projects, including the Municipal Asphalt Plant (1944, a designated New York City Landmark), that were generally consistent with ideas of the International Style. The partnership lasted until Kahn’s retirement in 1965. Kahn died in 1972. He was a Fellow with the American Institute of Architects and served as president of the Municipal Art Society. During his more than fifty year career, Kahn established himself as one of New York’s leading architects.

Architecture of the Bergdorf Goodman Building/s

From the start both Frederick Brown and the real estate brokers, Cross and Brown, had their own concepts as to how the site would be developed.²² Kahn later wrote:

I cannot recall that my opinion as to the entire scheme was called for, but what did transpire was a decision to have a series of stores from 57th to 58th, so arranged that the different stores could be serviced from a rear alley.²³

The idea of a “rear alley” that would emulate the well-known shopping arcades in Paris and London, and create eight distinct buildings in plan, was eventually abandoned during construction, but the design did ultimately incorporate seven six- to nine-story buildings.²⁴ The decision to erect seven separate stores as opposed to a skyscraper was in some ways inconsistent with the general transformation of Fifth Avenue, particularly in an era when buildings such as the 17-story Netherland hotel, built in 1892-93, were being replaced by much taller structures. The site itself had been subject to Heckscher’s plans for a towering hotel of 55, or later 42, stories. The decision, however, was not completely without precedent.²⁵ In fact, a similar decision was made by Benjamin Winter, the real estate broker who purchased the Vanderbilt residence at Fifth Avenue and West 52nd Street around the same time. Initially intending to erect a thirty-three-story skyscraper on the site, Winter changed his plans in response to “the tremendous pressure for Fifth Avenue space by exclusive shops and the demand for the small individual building.”²⁶ In both organization and design, Brown’s speculative development at Fifth Avenue between 57th and 58th Street was attempting to appeal to the demand for high-end specialty shops.

Kahn’s design for Fifth Avenue was based on a modified pavilion plan with the five inner six-story buildings framed by nine-story buildings at either end. In describing Kahn’s design in 1927, the *New York Times* wrote:

The Buildings have been so planned that, although the general mass will present a unified appearance, each structure will retain sufficient individuality to mark the special character which a tenant may desire.... The design of the buildings have been kept within careful restraint, with extremely particular attention to the practical requirement of show windows and general illumination so that these structures will be thoroughly useful as individual units.²⁷

The decision to have a series of individual stores that would present as a unified group can be seen in Kahn’s design. On the exterior, the Fifth Avenue facade reads as seven distinct units. The two larger buildings are located at either end of Fifth Avenue and are separated by five smaller buildings, which follow an A-B-C-B-A pattern above the second story. While four of the five intermediate buildings are not unique in design, each building is sufficiently different in design from its immediate neighbors to suggest a degree of individuality. Other factors that enable the complex to be read as seven separate buildings on Fifth Avenue include stone partitions on the roof that emphasize the location of the historic party walls, and alternating setbacks and projections in the facades.

Visual unification of the seven buildings was achieved in several ways. First, all seven stores were designed in the Modern Classical style. Modern Classicism emerged as a style in the United States in the interwar years as a modern interpretation of classical architecture. In contrast to the earlier phase of the Classical Revival, which emphasized careful copying of historic sources, Modern Classicism took a much freer approach to historic models, abstracting and

simplifying classical motifs and using them with great restraint.²⁸ Kahn's design relied heavily on the forms of French classical architecture, yet embraced the abstraction and minimalism associated with Modern Classicism. Portions of the building's ornament also show the influence of the Art Deco style on the design. The decorative panels below the urns on 57th Street and in the round arches of several of the Fifth Avenue storefronts feature highly abstracted low relief ornament that incorporates spiral detailing, all elements that are prominent components of Art Deco architecture.

In addition to style, other features of Kahn's design that unify the seven buildings include the use of white marble cladding, the mansard roof, wall dormers, the horizontal alignment of window openings, and the symmetrical massing of the buildings.

Kahn's design harmonized with the other buildings on the Grand Army Plaza, which incorporated aspects of French Renaissance architecture intended to evoke elegance and appeal to a high-end clientele. These buildings included the Plaza Hotel, which was built in 1907 in the French Renaissance style and constructed of white brick and marble with green roof tiles; Marble Row, a series of Second Empire row houses on Fifth Avenue between 57th and 58th Street, which were completed in 1870 and named for their unusual choice of marble instead of brownstone; and the Savoy Plaza Hotel which was completed in 1927 in the French Renaissance style and featured a white marble base, white brick, and a green tiled roof.²⁹ On March 11, 1928, the *New York Times* wrote about the similarities between Bergdorf Goodman and its surrounding buildings:

The exterior of the building is of white South Dover marble with green bronze window trim, balcony and doorway, and a sloping roof of green tiles, thus carrying out the color scheme of other buildings on the plaza.³⁰

In addition to similarities in material and color, the buildings related to each other stylistically. Although, the Plaza Hotel, Marble Row, and the Savoy Plaza Hotel were constructed over approximately a 60-year time frame, all three projects evoked aspects of French Renaissance design. Similarly, Kahn's design sought to "emulate an elegant Parisian Avenue" and incorporated pilasters, stone balconies with wrought iron railings, and a unifying mansard roof.³¹

Kahn's design bears the strongest resemblance to the series of row houses which made up Marble Row, which were designed by Robert Mook to present as a unified mass. Built of marble as opposed to brownstone, the buildings incorporated a mansard roof with arched dormers and a pavilion at either end. The parallels between Kahn's design and Marble Row, as well as their proximity to each other, directly across Fifth Avenue, suggest that Kahn was influenced by their design.³²

Kahn's design for the site is unique within the broader portfolio of his work. Although best known for his Art Deco skyscrapers and loft buildings that are characterized by numerous setbacks, decorative terra cotta, and corbelled brickwork, the comparatively conservative appearance of this project provides a striking contrast. Kahn's design for 754 Fifth Avenue, which featured restrained marble walls punctuated by round-arches, balconies, and crowned with a mansard roof, was an extremely successful response to what appears to have been the requirements of the project: a design that would appeal to a high-end clientele and fit into the context of the Fifth Avenue shopping district and the architecture of Grand Army Plaza.

Edwin Goodman and the Early History of Bergdorf Goodman³³

Edwin Goodman was born in Lockport, New York and raised in Rochester. He was the son of a German-Jewish dry goods retailer. At nineteen, he moved to New York City, which was the center of the women's garment industry. He spent several years working as a cutter and fitter before being employed by Herman Bergdorf, who was the owner of a tailor shop at Fifth Avenue and 19th Street that catered to women. Edwin Goodman was an adept tailor, popular with the clientele, and possessed the business acumen that Bergdorf lacked. In 1901, Goodman became a partner in the business, and within a few years Bergdorf retired. Goodman retained the name, Bergdorf Goodman, but moved the business farther up Fifth Avenue, initially to 32nd Street and then, in 1914, to a new building directly across from St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Nine years later, Goodman revolutionized the women's clothing industry by becoming the first American couturier to offer ready-to-wear clothing. He understood that many women did not have the time or desire to spend hours being personally fitted. Importantly, Goodman managed to maintain superior customer service and a degree of exclusivity, despite offering ready-to-wear clothing. There were no clothing racks in his store, and Goodman never produced more than fifty articles of any one design. Every customer that entered his store was greeted by a saleswoman, who would bring out merchandise for the customer to inspect. His approach ensured that each customer continued to feel special, while his business grew significantly.

The Relocation of Bergdorf Goodman to Fifth Avenue and West 58th Street³⁴

As Bergdorf Goodman became ever more successful, they followed the retail migration north along Fifth Avenue. They quickly outgrew their location at Fifth Avenue and West 47th Street and plans for the development of Rockefeller Center necessitated that they relocate once more.³⁵

Bergdorf Goodman was the first tenant to commit to renting space in the complex, when they signed a twenty-one year lease almost a year prior to the building's completion.³⁶ For Goodman, the move to the complex's northernmost store at Fifth Avenue and West 58th Street was a risky proposition. The lease was more than Goodman could afford and no upscale retailer had dared venture this far north before. His timing however proved to be perfect. The new location was in excellent proximity to upper Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue, and other neighborhoods that were now drawing the wealthy.³⁷ "By moving to 58th Street, Mr. Goodman shattered the tradition that class stores could never succeed north of 57th Street."³⁸

The Influence of Edwin Goodman on the Design

Having leased space in the complex well before its completion, Bergdorf Goodman was able to have direct influence in its design. According to the author Donald L. Miller, Goodman involved himself with all aspects of the building's design and layout.³⁹ At his request Buchman & Kahn's design was modified to accommodate a ninth story that would serve as the Goodman family's residence.⁴⁰

Additionally, Goodman appears to have had significant influence over the design of the first two stories of the northern pavilion. Plans of the complex show that the Fifth Avenue storefronts of six of the seven buildings were to feature large display windows that would occupy most of the buildings width and that unassuming entrances would be incorporated within the glass. The 57th Street facade was to be treated in a similar manner with the exception of the arcade entrance. In contrast to the other stores, the first and second story of Bergdorf Goodman, which occupied the northern pavilion, included a rusticated base, round-arch entrances, and

classicizing ornament such as a cartouche, floral pendants, and winged putti, suggestive of French 18th-century sources.⁴¹

Similarly, with the exception of one modern salon, the interior of Bergdorf Goodman was decorated in the opulent Louis XV style, designed and executed by Theodore Hofstatter & Co.⁴² The store opened in March 1928 and was described the following month in *Architecture and Building*.⁴³

The Bergdorf Goodman Store is unusual, both in its arrangement and its decoration. The building is planned largely free from columns, the floor areas are spacious and the ceilings high. The interior follow the French styles of the Louis' and the Empire with a savoring of modern French decoration.... The principal entrance at the center on 58th Street leads into an elliptical rotunda in the style of the Empire. Along the street frontages are large show windows and in the rotunda, the front room, there are glass display cases for a limited display of merchandise. Here, as elsewhere throughout the building, the effect is of beautifully decorated and furnished salons wherein no merchandise is displayed.⁴⁴

Early Tenants and the Expansion of Bergdorf Goodman

In addition to Bergdorf Goodman, the building's original tenants included Louis Sherry's restaurant and the Dobbs & Company, which specialized in hats. The southern four buildings along Fifth Avenue were initially known as the Dobbs Building. In 1937, the Parke-Bernet Galleries took over four floors of the Dobbs Building. Other early tenants included the linen shop, Grande Maison de Blanc, which occupied 746 Fifth Avenue from 1934-1944; Steuben Glass, which occupied 748 Fifth in the 1930s before moving to the Corning-Steuben Building at 718 Fifth Avenue in 1937; the Tailored Woman, Inc. and Mary Lewis, Inc., both women's apparel businesses, which began renting space in 1939 and 1940; and the French jewelry firm of Van Cleef & Arpels, which also began leasing space in the building in 1940.⁴⁵

For Bergdorf Goodman, the move was a great success. Sales doubled at the new location and, in 1929, Goodman was able to expand his store by leasing the second through sixth floor of his original building and the two shops directly to the south.⁴⁶

In 1931, *Fortune* magazine wrote:

On Manhattan, there are *couturier* houses as 'exclusive' as Bergdorf Goodman... Yet the incomes of these houses are comparatively modest, their clienteles comparatively small. None of them has succeeded in clothing women in an exclusive way on so magnificent a scale as that which Mr. Goodman has achieved, with 18,000 customers on his books.⁴⁷

In 1932, the building's owner, Frederick Brown, declared bankruptcy and two years later the Fifth Avenue block front went into foreclosure. Bergdorf Goodman purchased the complex's three northern buildings in 1935 for \$3,000,000.⁴⁸ Continued success enabled Bergdorf Goodman to purchase the remaining buildings between 57th and 58th street on Fifth Avenue in 1947.⁴⁹ As existing tenants left, Bergdorf Goodman continued to expand, ultimately occupying all but the southeast corner of the building.⁵⁰

Later History of Bergdorf Goodman and 754 Fifth Avenue⁵¹

Upon Edwin Goodman's death in 1953, he was described by the *New York Times* as "one of the most eminent figures in American haute couture and merchandising."⁵² His son Andrew

Goodman took charge of the company and was “instrumental in enhancing its reputation and expanding its range of merchandise and personalized services.”⁵³ In 1972, he sold Bergdorf Goodman to what would become Carter Hawley Hale Stores. In 1987, Carter Hawley restructured its business and Bergdorf Goodman became a subsidiary of Neiman Marcus Group. Despite changes in ownership, Bergdorf Goodman continued to thrive at its Fifth Avenue location.

Since its construction in 1928, the complex’s first and second stories have undergone numerous alterations. The storefronts of the center buildings underwent a series of distinct designs for successive tenants, and were gradually incorporated by the expansion of Bergdorf Goodman. The most substantial change occurred between 1984 and 1985 when Bergdorf Goodman hired the architect Allan Greenberg to design a new facade for the first and second stories of the Fifth Avenue facade with the goal of creating a more unified appearance that reflected company’s expansion to all but one of the buildings within the complex. Greenberg later wrote:

“The building’s major entrance had always been on 58th Street, facing the Pulitzer Fountain and Central Park. The department store needed a more unified presence on Fifth Avenue, as well as major entrance. It had to be located off-center to attract shoppers from the busy corner at 57th Street. While the facade was to have its own identity, it was also to relate so well to the architecture of the 1928 buildings by Buchman and Kahn that it would look as if it had been there all the time.”⁵⁴

Greenberg’s design extended the rusticated first and second story of the northern pavilion, Bergdorf Goodman’s original store, to the five intermediate buildings and created a grand entrance on Fifth Avenue towards 57th Street that was loosely modeled on the original entrance on West 58th Street.⁵⁵

Today, Bergdorf Goodman occupies all but the southeast corner of the complex, which is leased to Van Cleef & Arpels. Buchman and Kahn’s original design remains largely intact above the second story and continues to read as seven aesthetically unified buildings. In 1990, Bergdorf Goodman extended its operations beyond the building with a men’s store in 745 Fifth Avenue, directly across the avenue. The store has also recently expanded its office and support spaces into 4 West 58th Street, adjacent to the original Bergdorf Goodman building to the east.

Recent alterations to the first two stories have continued the process of unifying the lower floors of the facade. They include changes to the complex’s 57th Street entrance, which was enlarged and remodeled to match Bergdorf Goodman’s original entrance on 58th Street. While a departure from the developer’s and the architect’s original intention, which was to house separate stores, it is a reflection of the success of Bergdorf Goodman, one of New York City’s most celebrated institutions and an original tenant of the site.⁵⁶

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STATEMENT OF REGULATORY INTENT

754 Fifth Avenue is noteworthy as the longtime home of Bergdorf Goodman, one of New York City's premiere retail establishments. The building is located on an irregularly-shaped lot at an important intersection of development at Fifth Avenue and West 57th Street and forming the terminus of Fifth Avenue retail at Grand Army Plaza to the north. With prominent views from Grand Army Plaza and Fifth Avenue, the building is characterized by its cubic form, associated with its retail nature, which has always been experienced in the context of taller buildings. Originally designed as an ensemble of separate retail establishments, the building has undergone numerous alterations over time as Bergdorf Goodman has expanded its retail operations to encompass most of the building at all floors. This history of change and expansion, a reflection of the changing nature of retail operations, has included expansion into adjacent buildings and the establishment of a Men's store across Fifth Avenue in the former Squibb Building. With the exception of the northern pavilion, the first two stories of 754 Fifth Avenue have been repeatedly altered since the building's construction.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that while 754 Fifth Avenue has architectural significance, the significance of the building today is related substantially to the history and cultural significance of Bergdorf Goodman itself, and that the building has changed over time as the needs of Bergdorf Goodman have changed. The Commission further recognizes that the needs of the retail enterprise may continue to change in the future, and will consider the historic evolution of the building when evaluating future alterations. The Commission also notes that Bergdorf Goodman's changing show window displays have been central to the building's retail character, and as a matter of policy, the Commission does not regulate displays in show windows. Finally, the Commission recognizes that Bergdorf Goodman's creative displays have traditionally included temporary lighting and decorations across the facades, and the intent of designation would be to allow continued installations.

The Commission notes that the original main entrance to Bergdorf Goodman was on West 58th Street, and that the prominent views of Bergdorf Goodman are from Fifth Avenue and Grand Army Plaza, and that the building's cubic form has always been seen in the context of much taller buildings, and will consider these factors in evaluating the appropriateness of future expansions.

NOTES

- ¹ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Notice of Review 03-6639, 754 Fifth Avenue (2003).
- ² New York City Department of Buildings, Job #101979815 (1999).
- ³ Portions of this section are adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Aeolian Building Designation Report* (LP-2125) (New York: City of New York, 2002), prepared by Jay Shockley, 4.
- ⁴ Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *(Former) L. P. Hollander & Company Building Designation Report* (LP-2124) (New York: City of New York, 2003), prepared by Virginia Kurshan, 2.
- ⁵ Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and John Massengale, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism 1890-1915*, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995), 194.
- ⁶ "Fifth Avenue's Old-Time Fashionable Homes Disappearing Rapidly for Trade Purposes," *New York Times*, March 26, 1913, XX1.
- ⁷ "Noted Fifth Avenue Mansions Yielding to Advance of Trade," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan 12, 1926, 6.
- ⁸ Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes. The Crown Building, A 1921 Elegance Entangled in Disputes," *New York Times*, Feb 3, 1991.
- ⁹ "Vanderbilt Chateau to Go for \$7,100,00 as a Business Site," *New York Times*, Aug 8, 1925, 1.
- ¹⁰ "Takes Vanderbilt Chateau for Cash: Frederick Brown Closes Deal with Mrs. Vanderbilt as he Starts for Europe," *New York Times*, June 16, 1926, 13.
- ¹¹ Portions of this section are adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Brown Building* (LP-2128) (New York: City of New York, 2003), 8, prepared by Gale Harris;
- ¹² "Frederick Brown, Pioneer Mid-Town Developer, Dies," *New York Herald Tribune*, Dec 11, 1960, 62.
- ¹³ "Frederick Brown, 90, Is Dead: Realty Man and Philanthropist," *New York Times*, Dec 11, 1960, 88.
- ¹⁴ "Frederick Brown, 90, Is Dead," 88.
- ¹⁵ Jewel Stern and John A. Stuart, *Ely Jacques Kahn, Architect: Beaux-Arts to Modernism in New York* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006), 116.
- ¹⁶ Anthony Robins, *No. 750 Fifth Avenue: Bergdorf Goodman* (New York: Thompson & Columbus, Inc., 2015), 23.
- ¹⁷ Portions of this section are adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *2 Park Avenue* (LP-2186) (New York: City of New York, 2006), 3-4, prepared by Virginia Kurshan; Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Holland Plaza Building* (LP-2537) (New York: New York City, 2013), 4-5, prepared by Virginia Kurshan. Additional information comes from the following sources: Stern and Stuart, *Ely Jacques Kahn, Architect*.
- ¹⁸ *New York Herald Tribune*, April 17, 1932, J18; Christopher Gray, "The Old Squibb Building 'Restoration' is Adding Color to Original All-White Design," *New York Times*, Oct 2, 1988.
- ¹⁹ Stern and Stuart, *Ely Jacques Kahn, Architect*, 92.
- ²⁰ Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 374; "Art Deco Study Guide," *Victoria and Albert Museum*, accessed Oct 11, 2016, https://web.archive.org/web/20081025210428/http://www.vam.ac.uk/nal/guides/art_deco/index.html.
- ²¹ Stern and Stuart, *Ely Jacques Kahn, Architect*, 92.
- ²² Ely Jacques Kahn unpublished autobiography, manuscript at Avery Archive, Columbia University, Chapter II, 2.
- ²³ Ibid.

- ²⁴ The doorways to the arcade were constructed and remain on 57th and 58th Street; Robins, *No. 750 Fifth Avenue*, 24-25.
- ²⁵ Robins, *No. 750 Fifth Avenue*, 10-11.
- ²⁶ “W.K. Vanderbilt Mansion Gives Way to 5 Shops,” *New York Herald*, Mar 1, 1926, 15.
- ²⁷ “Group of Buildings for Vanderbilt Site,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1927, p. W19.
- ²⁸ A portion of this section was adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Bronx General Post Office Lobby, First Floor Interior Designation Report* (LP-2552) (New York: City of New York, 2013), prepared by Christopher D. Brazee, 3.
- ²⁹ Stanley Turkel, *Hotel Mavens: Lucius M. Boomer, George C. Boldt and Oscar of the Waldorf* (Bloomington, IN, Author House, 2014), 121; Christopher Gray, “Grand Army Plaza: Spaces that March to Different Drummers,” *New York Times*, July 18, 1999, RE7; Christopher Gray, “57th Street and Fifth Avenue: An 1870 Marble Row, Built in an Age of Brownstones,” *New York Times*, Apr 7, 2002, J7.
- ³⁰ “5th Ave. Building Opened,” *New York Times*, Mar 11, 1928, 159.
- ³¹ Stern and Stuart, *Ely Jacques Kahn, Architect*, 117.
- ³² Marble Row was demolished in 1928 to make way for the Squibb Building, the same year that Bergdorf Goodman was completed.
- ³³ This section is based on the following sources: Donald L. Miller, *Supreme City* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 191-195; “Profiles: The Boss,” *The New Yorker*, Nov 3, 1934, 25.
- ³⁴ Portions of this section are adapted from: LPC, *B. Altman & Company Department Store Building* (LP-1274) (New York: City of New York, 1985), 1, prepared by Sarah Williams; LPC, *Lord & Taylor Building* (LP-2271) (New York: City of New York, 2007), 3, prepared by Marianne Percival.
- ³⁵ Miller, *Supreme City*, 191-195; Anthony Robins, *No. 750 Fifth Avenue*, 14.
- ³⁶ “Fifth Avenue Lease Filed,” *New York Times*, Apr 15, 1927, 37; “Fifth Av. Building Leased by Brown,” *New York Times*, Mar 12, 1927, 27.
- ³⁷ Miller, *Supreme City*, 191-192.
- ³⁸ “Edwin Goodman Dies,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1953, 20.
- ³⁹ Miller, *Supreme City*, 194-195.
- ⁴⁰ “Edwin Goodman to Occupy Home Atop Fifth Av. Building,” *New York Times*, Jan 25, 1928, 40.
- ⁴¹ Observations are based on building elevations stored at Avery Archive, Columbia University.
- ⁴² “5th Av. Building Opened,” *New York Times*, Mar 11, 1928, 159; Miller, 194-195.
- ⁴³ *Ibid*, 159.
- ⁴⁴ “The Bergdorf Goodman Building, New York City,” *Architecture and Building*, Apr 11, 1928, 159.
- ⁴⁵ “Building Leased to Apparel Shop,” *New York Times*, July 9, 1934, 29; “Mary Lewis Rents 746 Fifth Avenue,” *New York Times*, Feb 25, 1944, 29; “New Shop Opened on Fifth Avenue,” *New York Times*, Sep 28, 1939, 20; “French Jewelers take 5th Avenue. Unit,” *New York Time*, Dec 5, 1940, 47.
- ⁴⁶ “Bergdorf Goodman Leases Two Adjoining Buildings,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1929, 13; “Store will Expand,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1929, RE5.
- ⁴⁷ “Bergdorf Goodman,” *Fortune*, 3 (Jun, 1931), 63.
- ⁴⁸ “Noted 5th Av. Site sold for \$3,000,000,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1935, 23; Christopher Gray, “From Architectural Links to Common Ownership,” *New York Times*, Aug 30, 1998, RE5.

⁴⁹ Miller, *Supreme City*, 192-194; "Shop in Fifth Ave. Plans to Expand," *New York Times*, Dec 14, 1947, 63; "Edwin Goodman, 76, Merchant, is Dead," *New York Times*, Aug 20, 1953, 27.

⁵⁰ Christopher Gray, "From Architectural Links to Common Ownership," *New York Times*, Aug 30, 1998, RE5.

⁵¹ Information in this section is based on the following source: "Bergdorf Goodman Inc.," Jay P. Pederson, eds, *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol. 52, (Detroit: St. James Press, 2003), 45-48.

⁵² "Edwin Goodman, 76, Merchant, is Dead," 27.

⁵³ "Edwin Goodman Dies," 20; "Bergdorf Goodman Inc," 45-48.

⁵⁴ Allan Greenberg, *Allan Greenberg: Classical Architect* (New York: Rizzoli, 2013).

⁵⁵ Robins, *No. 750 Fifth Avenue*, 40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of the building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Bergdorf Goodman 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, Bergdorf Goodman occupies one of the most prominent sites along the Fifth Avenue retail corridor; that it was developed by Frederick Brown to read as separate, but aesthetically unified, buildings; that the complex was designed by Ely Jacques Kahn, one of the most important New York architects of the 20th century; that the building was designed in the Modern Classical style and incorporated classicizing elements of French architecture that harmonized with the other buildings on the Grand Army Plaza; that Bergdorf Goodman, one of New York City's most celebrated department stores, was an original tenant; and that Bergdorf Goodman is significant for its role in the commercial development of Fifth Avenue.

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 Bergdorf Goodman, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1273, Lot 33, as its Landmark Site.

Commissioners

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

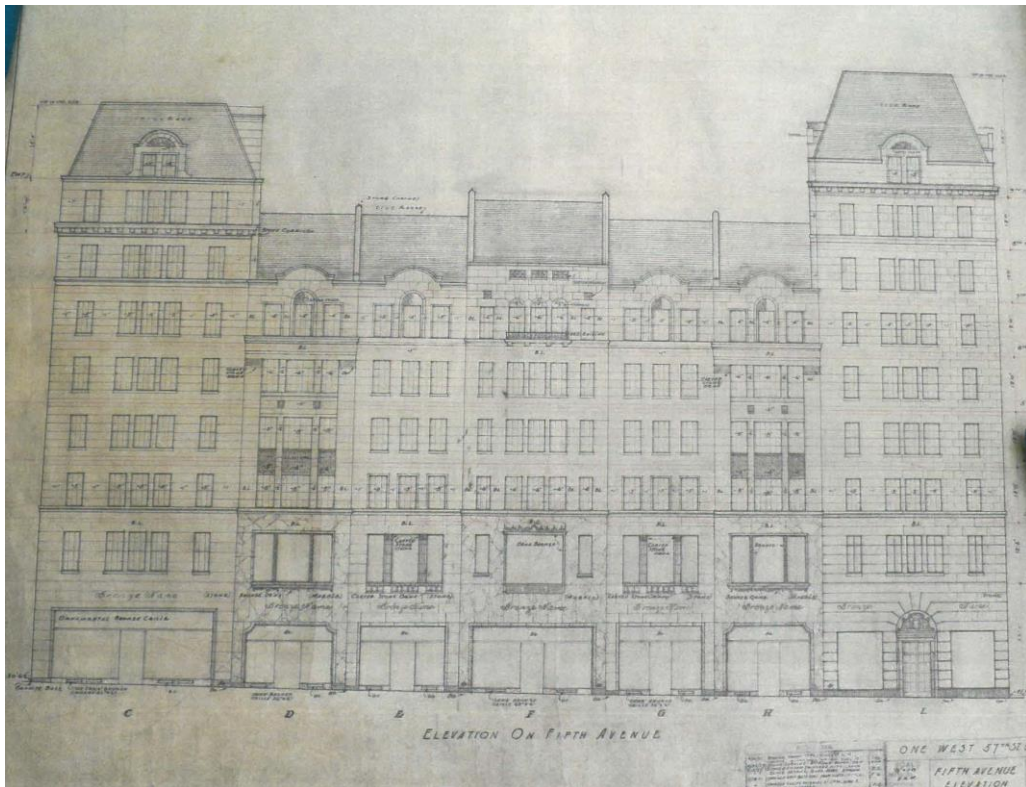
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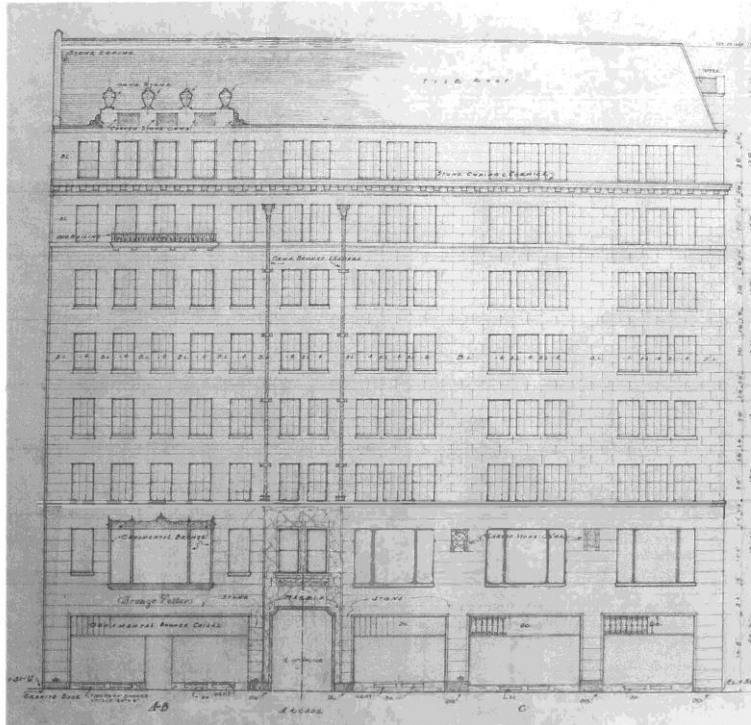
Jeanne Lutfy, Adi Shamir-Baron, Kim Vauss, Commissioners



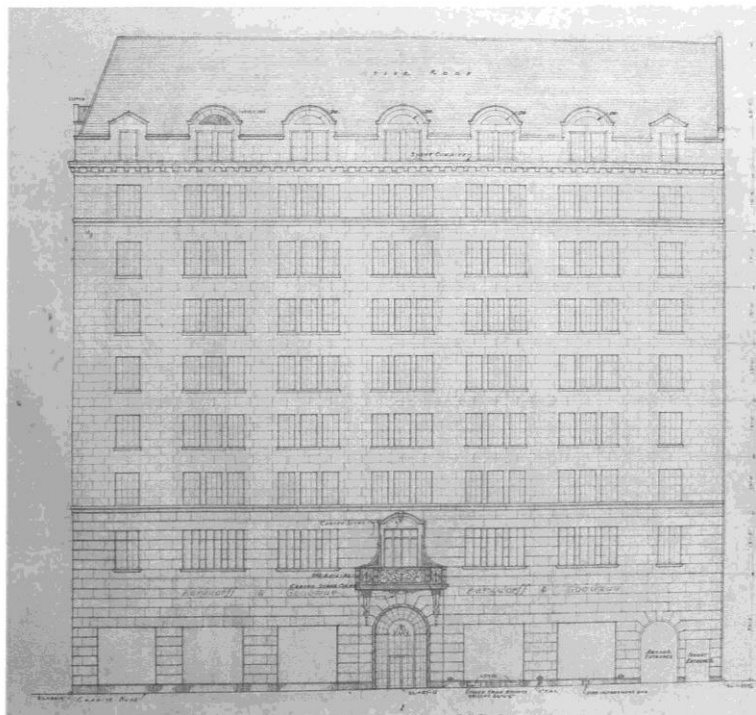
Bergdorf Goodman
 754 Fifth Avenue (aka 2 West 58th Street), Manhattan, Block 1273, Lot 33
Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016



Bergdorf Goodman
 Drawings of Fifth Avenue Elevation
Photo: Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University



Bergdorf Goodman
 Drawings of West 57th Street Elevation
Photo: Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University



Bergdorf Goodman
 Drawings of West 57th Street Elevation
Photo: Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University



Bergdorf Goodman
West 57th Street Elevation
Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016



Bergdorf Goodman
Fifth Avenue Elevation: Southern Pavilion
Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016



Bergdorf Goodman
Fifth Avenue Elevation
Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016



Bergdorf Goodman
Fifth Avenue Elevation
Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016



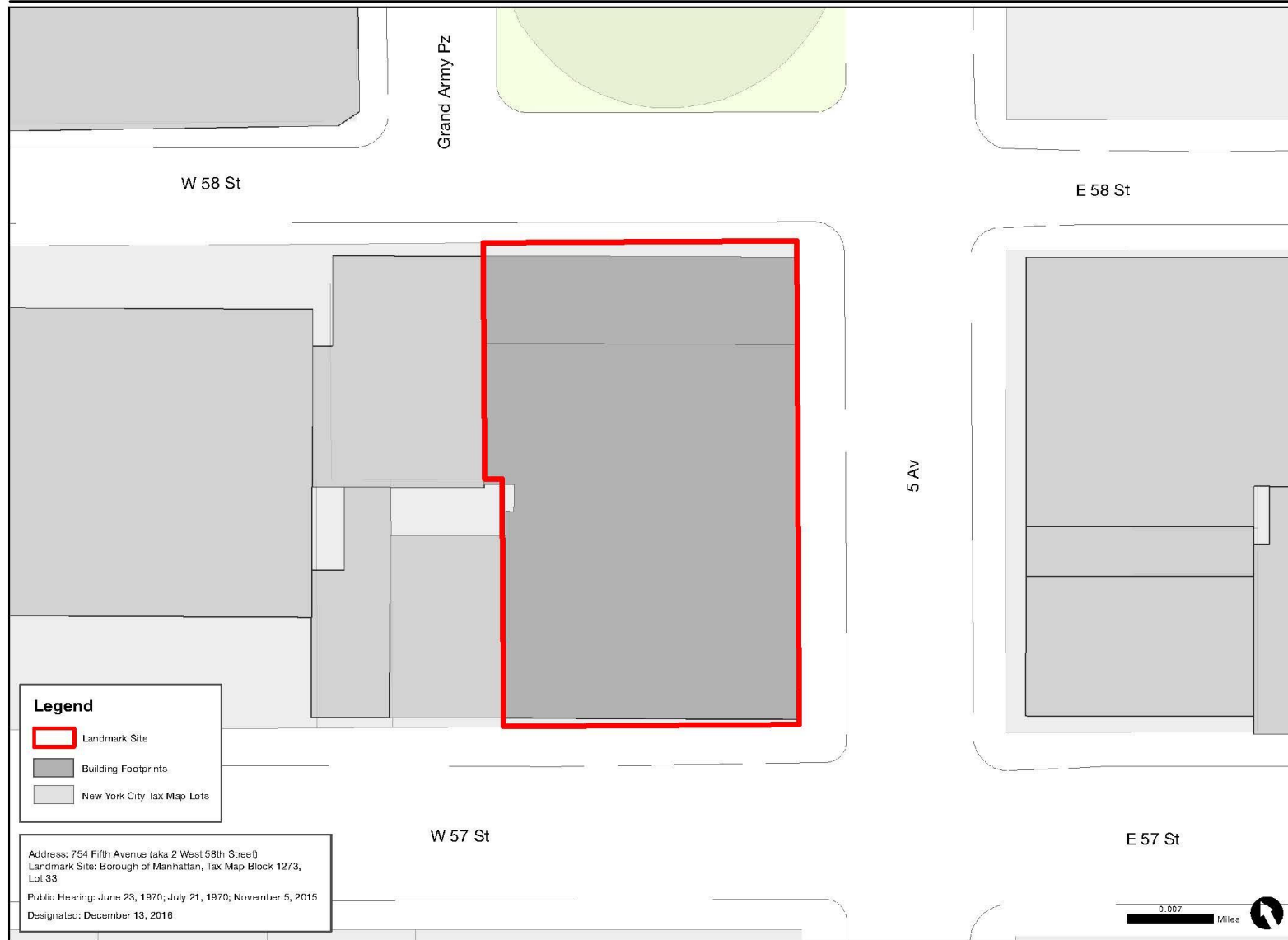
Bergdorf Goodman
Fifth Avenue Elevation: Northern Pavilion
Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016



Bergdorf Goodman
Original West 58th Street Entrance to Bergdorf Goodman
Photo: Corinne Engelbert, 2016



Bergdorf Goodman
Original Fifth Avenue Entrance to Bergdorf Goodman
Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016



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