

UNITED STATES CUSTOM HOUSE INTERIOR, main (second) floor interior consisting of the entrance vestibule, lobby with elevator halls, Cashier's Office (Room 217), Regional Commissioner of Customs' Office (Room 219-220), Manager's Office (Room 218), the hall connecting the lobby and the rotunda, the rotunda up to and including the skylight, the stairhall at the south end of the rotunda; the spiral staircases to the eastern and western ends of the lobby extending from the first floor to the seventh floor including the stair landings at each floor; the mezzanine (third) floor interior consisting of the elevator halls above the lobby and the hallway above the main floor offices, and the fixtures and components of these spaces, including but not limited to, all lighting fixtures, wall and ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, transom grilles, elevator doors and transom grilles, window grilles, metal grilles over ventilation ducts, murals, attached clocks, freestanding panelled partitions; railings, and attached counters and sign boards; Bowling Green, Manhattan. Built 1905-1909; Architect Cass Gilbert.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 12, Lot 1.

On November 14, 1978, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the United States Custom House Interior main (second) floor interior consisting of the entrance vestibule, lobby with elevator halls, Cashier's Office (Room 217), Regional Commissioner of Customs' Office (Room 219-220), Manager's Office (Room 218), the hall connecting the lobby and the rotunda, the rotunda up to and including the skylight, the stairhall at the south end of the rotunda; the spiral staircases to the eastern and western ends of the lobby extending from the first floor to the seventh floor including the stair landings at each floor; the mezzanine (third) floor interior consisting of the elevator halls above the lobby and the hallway above the main floor offices, and the fixtures and components of these spaces, including but not limited to, all lighting fixtures, wall and ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, transom grilles, elevator doors and transom grilles, window grilles, metal grilles over ventilation ducts, murals, attached clocks, freestanding panelled partitions, railings, and attached counters and sign boards (Item No. 11). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Seven witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The celebrated interior of the United States Custom House, a magnificent Beaux-Arts design by architect Cass Gilbert, holds a special place as one of the finest examples of government architecture in the United States. The exterior was designated a New York City Landmark on October 14, 1965. Begun in 1905, the interior was essentially completed in 1909.<sup>1</sup> Gilbert's design incorporated the motifs of an interior rotunda and an exterior colonnade, both elements of earlier New York custom houses by Town & Davis and by Isaiah Rogers. He also created a building to satisfy both the practical needs of the Custom Service, at this its busiest location, and to symbolize artistically the unique position which the New York Custom House held in the eyes of the nation and the world.

In the days before income and corporate taxes the national government was run largely on the tariff revenues from imported goods. In 1852 it was estimated that fully 80 percent of the entire country's customs revenue came from the New York Custom House. The powers and staff of the Collector of the Port of New York grew with the increasing volume of trade, and because the Collector drew his salary as a percentage of the annual revenue, he boasted a yearly income which was greater than the President's. In addition, he had about 1,000 well-paying government positions at his disposal and was, in fact, the largest dispenser of Federal patronage in the State of New York. With this immense political power the Collector achieved a national stature second only to that of the Secretary of the Treasury. In 1884 one reporter summed up the situation:

Three things are perfectly clear to citizens of New York: first, the United States of America constitute the greatest country on earth; second, New York is the greatest city in the country; third, the Custom-House is the greatest institution in the city. <sup>2</sup>

Since 1789 when the Custom Service was established, the New York Custom House had moved from one location to another in the lower end of Manhattan. When a fire in 1815 swept through Government House on Bowling Green, where the custom service had been located since 1799, the facility was moved to Wall Street. The first building to be built specifically as a custom house was the well-known Greek Revival structure by Town & Davis at the corner of Wall and Nassau Streets. Now known as Federal Hall, the Town & Davis building was built in 1834. Within thirty years the New York Custom Service had outgrown this building, and 1863 it moved into the former Third Merchants' Exchange by Isaiah Rogers near the corner of Wall and William Streets. <sup>3</sup> Cass Gilbert's custom house was built to replace the Rogers building. Indeed Rogers' classical colonnade and his central rotunda are echoed in Gilbert's design.

In 1888 a report was sent to the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department registering a complaint against the custom house at Wall and William which was described as "old, damp, ill-lighted, badly ventilated" with much wasted space. <sup>4</sup> It was pointed out that the Federal government was in the process of paying \$75,000 a year to rent office space in New York City and that by building a new Federally-owned facility it could save a considerable sum. Previously one argument for keeping the custom house in the Wall Street area had been the convenience in transporting gold to the Sub-Treasury. By the end of the 19th century, however, payments on revenue were commonly made by check or certificate. A recommendation was therefore made to build a new custom house on "the three small blocks immediately south of Bowling Green, at the foot of Broadway, fronting on the Battery, between Whitehall and State Streets." <sup>5</sup>

As the business of the New York Custom House was tightly bound to the political climate of the city, so too was the construction of a new custom house. The Republican political machine wanted exclusive rights in the spending of large sums for construction. In 1892 the Secretary of the Treasury had decided upon the Bowling Green site but work on the custom house could not begin until the old facility was sold which was not until 1899. In the early years of the Republic the President had taken the responsibility for overseeing the construction of Federal buildings, but by 1865 the work was taken over by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. Over the years because of the

tremendous increase in Federal construction, many felt that better buildings would be achieved if private architects were invited to compete for the design and construction of the Federal work. In 1893 after much pressure from the American Institute of Architects, the Tarsney Act was passed. This act authorized the Secretary of the Treasury, at his discretion, to invite no fewer than five architects to compete for the design of any Federal building. The general supervision of the construction was, however, left to the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. It was not until Lyman J. Gage, an active Chicago reformer, became Secretary of the Treasury in 1897 that the act was implemented. The New York Custom House was the fourth Federal building to be constructed under the provisions of the act, and the selection of its design was a direct outcome of the new policy.

In February 1899, Cass Gilbert, a well-known architect from St. Paul, Minnesota, made a trip to Washington in order to introduce himself to Secretary Gage and to announce his availability for any future Federal projects. Gilbert, had just recently moved his practice to New York in connection with his widely-acclaimed design for the Broadway-Chambers Building. His trip to Washington was not in vain, and in May he was listed as one of twenty architects invited to compete for the design of the new New York Custom House at Bowling Green. The firms, which were primarily from New York, had from June until September 18, 1899, to produce their plans.

Following two days of review, the jury consisting of James Knox Taylor, the Supervising Architect of the Treasury; Frank Miles Day, a Philadelphia architect, and Thomas R. Kimball, an Omaha architect, had narrowed down the choice to the designs by Carrère and Hastings, the firm recently victorious in the competition for the New York Public Library, and Cass Gilbert. For a short time collaboration between the two firms was contemplated, but after this idea was abandoned, the jury announced their selection of Gilbert. The decision to award the commission to an architect who had only recently moved to the city brought forth the fury of both the New York Republican machine and the local architects who had lost the prize. For two months charges were made against the competence of the jury. Many suggested that Gilbert's previous partnership with James Knox Taylor in St. Paul had influenced the Supervising Architect's decision. Members of the Republican state machine even took their case to President McKinley. However, Treasury Secretary Gage stood firm and, after a reexamination of the award, confirmed Gilbert on November 3, 1899.

The selection of Cass Gilbert (1859-1934) as architect for the Custom House is of particular interest. Gilbert was a midwestern architect who had received his architectural training in the east at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1880 he had entered the New York Office of McKim, Mead & White where he worked in close association with Stanford White. Following two productive years at the firm, where he worked on the Newport Casino, the Tiffany House and the Villard Houses, Gilbert returned to St. Paul and went into partnership with an M.I.T. classmate James Knox Taylor. Taylor later became Supervising Architect of the Treasury. From 1884 to 1892 the firm of Gilbert and Taylor built a strong reputation in the Midwest. The two architects, however, desired independent reputations and after eight years of collaboration discontinued their partnership. Through both his work in the East and in the Midwest Gilbert was known to a broad range of architects. It was, however, his winning design of 1896 in the competition

for the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul that established his national reputation. Gilbert's success in producing an overall design program of architecture, painting and sculpture for the Minnesota Capitol laid the foundation for his comprehensive design of the New York Custom House. Commissions for office buildings in 1897 and 1899 drew him east to Boston and New York. The critical success of his Broadway-Chambers building in New York, no doubt, contributed to his move from St. Paul to New York in 1899.

The site chosen for the new Custom House at the tip of Manhattan was originally occupied by Fort Amsterdam, and it was here that Peter Stuyvesant built his governor's mansion. Following the demolition of the fort in 1790 the founders of the new nation built Government House, intended as a home for President George Washington when New York was planned as the seat of government. The house was used by New York Governors Clinton and Jay and later was converted into a custom house which finally burned in 1815. In the early 19th century the streets surrounding Bowling Green were lined with the city's finest homes. By 1899, however, the three-story brick dwellings along the southside of Bowling Green had been converted into offices for steamship companies.

Following the leveling of "Steamship Row" for the new custom house site, a contract was awarded to Isaac A. Hoppes on December 22, 1900 for construction of the building's foundations. On November 7, 1901 bids for construction of the superstructure were opened and, after some question regarding the final appropriation, John Pierce of New York was elected as the general contractor. On October 7, 1902, Treasury Secretary Shaw led a tickertape parade from the old custom house on Wall Street down Broadway to the ceremonies at Bowling Green. Here he laid the cornerstone of the new custom house.

As in the Minnesota Capitol, the United States Custom House called for an ambitious program of sculpture and painting to complement the architecture. As early as 1900 the architect had outlined his plans:

The decorations of the interior will illustrate the commerce of ancient and modern times, both by land and sea; thus providing a series of themes of great pictorial interest appropriate to the structure. <sup>6</sup>

Both Gilbert's original competition design and his revisions which were accepted by the government on January 23, 1900, called for sculptures at the attic story and on four entrance blocks. Although Gilbert had failed to attract the country's two leading sculptors, Augustus St. Gaudens and Daniel Chester French, to the St. Paul project, he did succeed in persuading French to design the main sculptures, "The Continents", for the New York Custom House. Assisted by New York sculptor Adolph A. Weinman--who later gained acclaim for his work on the Municipal Building and on the Fort Greene Martyrs Monument in Brooklyn--French produced the celebrated sculptural groups between 1903 and 1907 at a cost of \$13,500 for each group. The carving of the groups in Tennessee marble was entrusted to the Piccirilli Brothers. French symbolically represented the continents of the Old World--Asia, Europe and Africa--by female figures in repose, while America was interpreted as "tense and alert with vigorous action." <sup>7</sup> Eight other sculptors

were commissioned to produce figures representing the twelve nations which have had the greatest influence on the United States. A great cartouche symbolizing the United States of America was produced by Karl Bitter for the center of the roof and another by Andrew O'Connor over the main entrance. Quarrying the stone for the various architectural features was no easy feat in 1904. The 30-ton lintel for the Custom House was quarried on Hurricane Island, Maine, and "a team of horses turned at a capstan for weeks in order to warp it to the water's edge." 8 From Maine it was transported on a three-masted schooner which was towed by a barge to New York.

In January 1906 it was reported that "by reason of the rather limited appropriation only a few of the public rooms including the Collector's office, the main halls, and the central rotunda, will be furnished with anything approaching a wealth of decoration." 9 On August 30, 1905, John C. Robinson of Chicago was awarded the general contract for the interior finish. The hesitancy with which the government funded the project worried many New Yorkers. As one critic lamented "few recall the money sunk into stone, bricks and mortar; they enjoy the final touches inside on which millions were not squandered." 10 Although the interior decoration was limited to the important rooms of the second floor, great care was taken with the work. Marbles of various patterns and colors constituted the main ornamentation of the walls in the Rotunda, the Lobby and the Cashiers' Office. Where minor carving was architecturally appropriate, Gilbert drew motifs from a wide variety of oceanic creatures to remind the visitor of the building's nautical connection.

The interior of the Custom House is most easily divided into three sections; the Lobby, the Rotunda, and the front offices. The Lobby with all its marble and vaulted splendor was, none the less, the key to the efficiency of Gilbert's Beaux-Arts design:

I have deemed it most important that all entrances, corridors, stairways and passages be arranged on the most direct and simple axial lines, and that each division should have its principal entry at or near the entrances or elevators. 10

The transverse lobby divides the important front offices from the more mundane business taking place in the Rotunda and the offices to the rear. Divided into seven compartments by a series of monumental piers, the Lobby is bilaterally symmetric in the Beaux-Arts fashion. The three central bays are characterized by their monumental round arches which are spanned at their springing by a boldly executed entablature. Two smooth monolithic Doric-style columns of green marble are located against the reveal of each arch and assist in carrying the entablature. This motif of open arches spanned by an entablature which is supported by monolithic columns was previously used by Gilbert in his work on the Minnesota Capitol. Flanking the tripartite central entranceway, which leads across the Lobby into the Rotunda, are the elevator halls and stair halls. The apsidial-ended stair halls which terminate the Lobby echo the round arch motif of the central bays. These contain dramatic freestanding staircases. The Lobby is handsomely panelled in a variety of marbles. The vaulting which springs from the piers is painted with allegorical figures and decorative arabesques. The

floor of the Lobby is laid out in geometric patterns of marble. Door surrounds are furnished with minor sculpture incorporating ship bow fronts and oceanic motifs. The continuous entablature that encircles the entrance lobby carries a gallery at the third floor level. Three gilded bronze lanterns and four torch-shaped sconces light the area.

An open-arched vestibule serves as a transition from the Lobby to the majestic Rotunda. The elliptical Rotunda consists of an immense thin masonry or timber arch which "is built up of several thicknesses of light fireproof tiles, one inch thick and six by twelve inches in dimensions, laid on edge." <sup>12</sup> The structure uses no metal work of any kind and depends solely on the cohesion of its tile and Portland cement fabric for support. Unlike the classical arch it does not rely on the lateral thrust of a keystone. As one architectural critic explained: "The dome is composed of an inner and outer shell, leaving a hollow space between the two shells." <sup>13</sup> The tiles are laid on end in nine layers at the foundation and in three layers above. The advantage of this form of construction is its ability to admit and hold the 140-ton glass and metal skylight with no visible sign of support to mar the aesthetic effect. The freestanding stairs which mark the ends of the lobby are based on a similar system. The stairs "spring from landing to landing in the form of graceful curves, with the flat tiles laid against each other in cement to give rigidity and support." <sup>14</sup>

The man who introduced this structural system to the United States and who was in great demand by the late 19th-century Beaux-Arts trained architects who so often employed the classical dome in their designs was Rafael Guastavino (1842-1908). After achieving a strong reputation in Spain for his revival of the Mediterranean system of thin masonry vaulting, Guastavino came to the United States in 1881 and began to adapt the system to American building practices. Guastavino's work for McKim, Mead & White at the Boston Public Library established his reputation within the American architectural community. The demand for a rotunda in the Custom House reminiscent of those used in the two former custom houses was strong. By January 1906 when the Guastavino Fireproof Construction Company was contracted to construct the Custom House dome and staircase, their established national reputation had made them the logical choice for the work.

The walls of the Rotunda are divided horizontally into three regions. The marble sheathed drum of the Rotunda is patterned by a series of pilasters which link eight blind doorways surmounted by ship bow fronts. The vaulting of the dome remained unadorned until 1937. At that time the American painter Reginald Marsh (1898-1954) was commissioned by the Treasury Relief Art Project, an offspring of the W.P.A., to provide a series of murals depicting modern shipping in New York harbor for the Rotunda dome. For this immense project which would cover 2,300 square feet Marsh was assisted by eight young painters whom he undoubtedly knew through his teaching activities at the Art Students League. Marsh's assistants included Xavier J. Barile, Lloyd Lozes Goff, Mary Fife (Mrs. Edward Laning), Ludwig Mactarian, Oliver M. Baker, John Poehler, J. Walkely and E. Volsung. Mary Fife recalled her days of sketching for the project:

I would get up at three in the morning on a cold spring day and take the Broadway bus down to the Battery, where Reg would be waiting in the dark to board the tugboat which was going out to meet an incoming liner... Reg wanted details of lifeboats, davits, hawsers, ventilators, stacks, masts and rigging, sirens, bells, deck-chairs--everything. <sup>15</sup>

Marsh briefed the young painters in his Union Square studio on layouts, designs and techniques. They had to familiarize themselves with the fresco-secco technique for which the Swedish painter Olle Nordmark was consulted. Secco is the process of painting a mural on dried lime plaster. Although this surface coating lacks the brilliance and permanence of real fresco, it gives a matte finish of moderately bright color in less time and for less money. The technique was used in traditional Swedish wall painting and Nordmark was an expert in working with secco. <sup>16</sup> Marsh adapted this process to his own particular painting style. Marsh's exuberant portrayal of urban life placed him among the American Scene painters of the 1930's. He had studied with the Ash Can School painter John Sloan and the spirit of his work often recalled the work of this earlier realist movement. Interspersed with the port scenes are trompe l'oeil niches which contain paintings by Marsh of eight early explorers. Marsh had also gone to Europe to study such Old Masters as Rubens and Delacroix, and his renderings of these explorers clearly reflect the European classical tradition. An elaborate cornice of gilded consoles rims the oculus from which the radiating skylight by Heinigke and Bowen springs. A great marble counter encircles the center of the room where floodlights are located. A small rear hall aids access to and from the Rotunda. During World War II for security reasons the skylight was painted over.

In the north west corner of the Custom House is located the Commissioner's Office, which was the focus of great elaboration. The most ornate room in the Custom House, it was designed as the main office for the Collector of the Port of New York. Fully panelled in oak from floor to ceiling by the Tiffany Studios, the office is divided by an elaborately carved Renaissance-inspired screen which is pierced by a doorway marked by a segmentally-arched hood. Above the oak walls were placed ten paintings of 17th-century ports selected because of their relation to the settlement and commerce of the Dutch and English colonies. The paintings and probably all the painted decorations in the vaulting of the Lobby were by the muralist Elmer E. Garnsey (1862-1946). Garnsey was one of a skilled group of American mural painters who were following the decorative example of John LaFarge. LaFarge's comprehensive design on the interior of H.H. Richardson's Trinity Church in Boston in 1876 was an immediate national success and created a demand for such interior decoration in the architecture which followed. Garnsey, a graduate of Cooper Union and the Art Students League of New York, had studied with Francis Lathrop who assisted LaFarge at Trinity. Garnsey was also one of the young designers who participated in the work at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. More importantly Garnsey had worked on the very successful interiors of Cass Gilbert's Minnesota Capitol. It was this connection which, no doubt, secured his services at the Custom House. When the Federal government approved Gilbert's ideas for the interior, the architect immediately recommended Garnsey for the job. In his review of 19th-century mural painters Samuel Isham described Garnsey as concentrating on the "difficult work of harmonizing the coloring, planning the arrangement and designing the borders, arabesques and all the subsidiary detail."<sup>17</sup> Although Garnsey painted some of the figure work, it was most often left to others. <sup>18</sup>

Another outstanding feature of the room is a great fireplace of Caen stone inscribed with the following:

On this site Fort Amsterdam was erected in 1626. Government House was built in 1790 for President Washington. Here Geo. Clinton and John Jay lived. Used as Custom House from 1799 to 1815.

Above the inscription lies a carved stone overmantel above which a Garnsey painting is hung. The room is encircled by a gilded frieze incorporating nautical motifs. An ornate gilded ceiling of octagonal coffers finishes the room. Adjacent to the Commissioner's Office is the Manager's Office, a simple room which displays plaster walls surmounted by an Ionic cornice.

In the northeast corner of the Custom House is located the Cashier's Office which is divided longitudinally by a marble counter topped by a bronze screen. The south wall of the room, which constituted the public area, is faced in white marble while the walls behind the Cashier's screen were rendered in plaster. The doorways are ornamented with crossette architraves featuring carving of nautical motifs. The ceiling of the Cashier's Office is an elaborate plaster work creation suggesting a painted and gilded Renaissance boxed-beam design.

The interior of the United States Custom House at Bowling Green is one of the finest examples of comprehensive Beaux-Arts decorative planning in the City of New York. By engaging the services of such nationally known artisans as painter Elmer E. Garnsey, builder Rafael Guastavino, and The Tiffany Studios as decorators, Cass Gilbert was able to create an interior design to rival the majesty of his exterior. In addition, Reginald Marsh's murals of New York harbor on the dome of the Rotunda have become significant reminders of the city during the 1930s. When the Custom House was built, contemporary New Yorkers demanded an interior to match the exterior:

A building designed on the scale of the new Custom House should not be like a splendid Gothic church which carries no sculpture because the funds have run dry. It should be consistent within and without, having paintings and mosaics to correspond with the sculpture on its three facades, color effects to brighten its halls and chief apartments, stories of the past and present to entertain the native and instruct the foreigner. 19

By 1909 New York was provided with a splendid interior reminiscent of its historical role as the nation's premier port and symbolic of the continuous importance of the Custom Service to the Federal government.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The general contractor for the interior was John C. Robinson, 910 Rector Boulevard in Chicago. Robinson's contract began August 30, 1905 and was closed in 1909. Robinson's contract stipulated that the Post Office at the south end of the building be finished by February 20, 1906; in advance of all other work. Work on the remaining areas of the Custom House was begun in 1907. By 1909 the portions of the Custom House being designated were finished. As late as 1912 contracts for work on the elevators and for the rearrangement of some offices were still outstanding. United States Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, Annual Report for 1909 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), p. 402; I.N. Phelps Stokes, The Iconography of Manhattan Island, Vol. 5 (New York: Robert Dodd, 1915-1928), p. 2067.
2. William J. Hartman, "Politics and Patronage: The New York Custom House, 1852-1902" Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1952), p. 10.
3. The Merchants' Exchange was doubled in height with a second colonnade in 1907 by the firm of McKim, Mead & White. It is now occupied by offices of Citibank and was designated a New York City Landmark in 1965.
4. William J. Fryer, Jr., Site for New U.S. Public Buildings in the City of New York (New York: Willis McDonald & Co., 1889), p. 7.
5. Ibid., p. 13.
6. "Cass Gilbert's New York Customhouse Design," The Inland Architect and News Record, Vol. 35 (February 1900), p. 7.
7. "Daniel Chester French's Four Symbolic Groups For the New York Custom House," Craftsman, 10 (April 1906), p. 75.
8. New York Times, 23 November 1904, p. 6.
9. New York Times, 14 January 1906, p. 3.
10. New York Times, 7 October 1906, p. 8.
11. "Cass Gilbert's New York Customhouse Design," p. 6.
12. "The New York Custom House," Architects' and Builders' Magazine, IX new series (November 1907), p. 60.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 61.
15. Edward Laning, The Sketchbooks of Reginald Marsh (Greenwich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1973), pp. 104-105.

- 16..In 1933 Nordmark's work was exhibited at the Delphic Studios in New York. He had also collaborated with Swedish sculptor Carl Milles and New York architect Linton Wilson in the design of "The Swedish Classroom" at the University of Pittsburgh. Artist'Clipping File New York Public Library.
17. Samuel Isham, The History of American Painting (New York: Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 560.
18. Because Isham identified Garnsey as a painter who specialized in general decorative effects and because Garnsey was sent plans of the interior by Gilbert it would seem likely that the mural work in the Lobby vaults was his.
19. New York Times, 7 October 1906, p. 8.

#### FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the United States Custom House Interior main (second) floor interior consisting of the entrance vestibule, lobby with elevator halls, Cashier's Office (Room 217), Regional Commissioner of Customs' Office (Room 219-220), Manager's Office (Room 218), the hall connecting the lobby and the rotunda, the rotunda up to and including the skylight, the stairhall at the south end of the rotunda; the spiral staircases to the eastern and western ends of the lobby extending from the first floor to the seventh floor including the stair landings at each floor; the mezzanine (third) floor interior consisting of the elevator halls above the lobby and the hallway above the main floor offices, and the fixtures and components of these spaces, including but not limited, to all lighting fixtures, wall and ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, transom grilles, elevator doors and transom grilles, window grilles, metal grilles over ventilation ducts, murals, attached clocks, freestanding panelled partitions, railings, and attached counters and sign boards; have a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the United States Custom House Interior is one of the finest examples of government architecture in the United States; that it was designed by noted architect Cass Gilbert between 1905 and 1909; that the Custom House was built to symbolize artistically the unique position which the Custom Service in New York held in the eyes of the nation and the world; that the design borrowed themes from two earlier custom houses

on Wall Street; that the interior is an important example of comprehensive Beaux-Arts decorative planning; that the architect employed the services of such nationally known artisans as painter Elmer E. Garnsey, builder Rafael Guastavino and The Tiffany Studios, as decorators to create an interior design to rival the majesty of his exterior; that murals by Reginald Marsh of New York harbor on the dome of the Rotunda have become significant landmark reminders of the city during the 1930s; and that the interior continues to create a strong visual impression on the users of and visitors to the building.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the United States Custom House Interior, main (second) floor interior consisting of the entrance vestibule, lobby with elevator halls, Cashier's Office (Room 217), Regional Commissioner of Customs' Office (Room 219-220), Manager's Office (Room 218), the hall connecting the lobby and the rotunda, the rotunda up to and including the skylight, the stairhall at the south end of the rotunda; the spiral staircases to the eastern and western ends of the lobby extending from the first floor to the seventh floor including the stair landings at each floor; the mezzanine (third) floor interior consisting of the elevator halls above the lobby and the hallway above the main floor offices, and the fixtures and components of these spaces, including but not limited to, all lighting fixtures, wall and ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, transom grilles, elevator doors and transom grilles, window grilles, metal grilles over ventilation ducts, murals, attached clocks, freestanding panelled partitions, railings, and attached counters and sign boards; Bowling Green, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 12, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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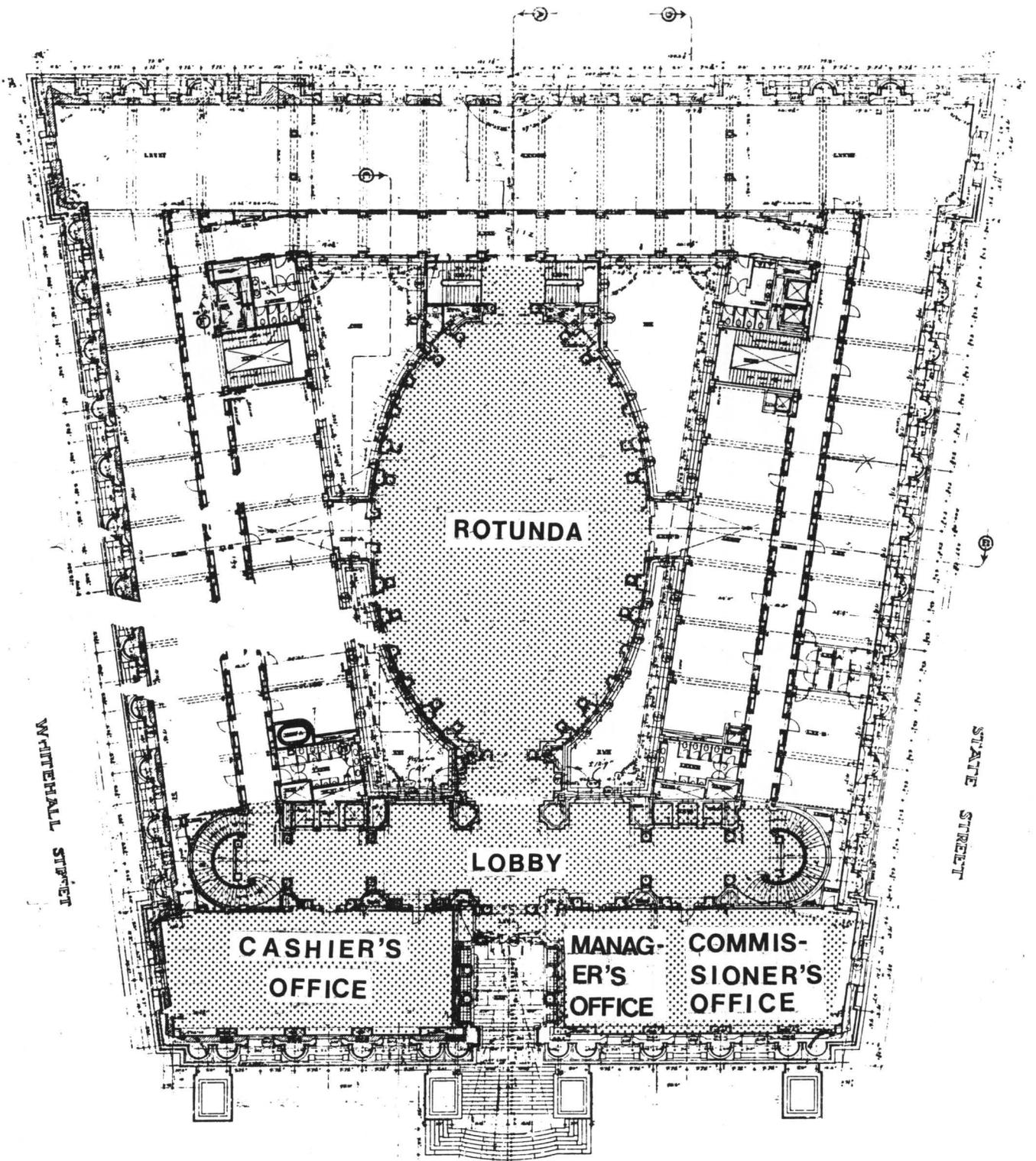
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**U.S. CUSTOM HOUSE  
INTERIOR**

**MAIN FLOOR**



