

SUN BUILDING, 280 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1845-46, 1850-51, 1852-53, 1872, 1884; architects Joseph Trench & Co., Trench & Snook, [Frederick] Schmidt, Edward D. Harris

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 153, Lot 1 in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On June 14, 1983, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Sun Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 14). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has received letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation, including a letter from the Commissioner of the Department of General Services.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Sun Building, originally the A.T. Stewart Store, is one of the most influential buildings erected in New York City during the 19th century. Its appearance in 1846 (Fig.1) introduced a new architectural mode based on the palaces of the Italian Renaissance. Designed by the New York architects, Joseph Trench and John B. Snook, it was built by one of the century's greatest merchants, Alexander Turney Stewart. Within its marble walls, Stewart began the city's first department store, a type of commercial enterprise which was to have a great effect on the city's economic growth and which would change the way of merchandising in this country. The image the building conveyed, that of a Renaissance palace, reflected a new, more conspicuous, image on the part of the city's wealthy merchants and captured the imagination of the public. The building set a style and form for mercantile buildings that lasted into the 20th century. Thus the Sun Building is an important milestone in the development of American architecture and a dignified memorial to one of the city's most respected 19th-century businessmen, A.T. Stewart.

#### A. T. Stewart and His Building

Alexander Turney Stewart (Fig.2), the son of Alexander and Margaret (Turney), was born at the end of 1803 in Ulster, Northern Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Leaving Trinity College, Dublin, during his second year, Stewart traveled to the United States, landing in New York in 1818 with letters of introduction and enough money with which to live comfortably. After returning to Ireland to receive an inheritance from his grandfather's estate, which amounted to L1000 or about \$5,000, he invested the money in

Irish laces, "insertions," and "scollop trimmings." Upon his return to New York he rented a small storefront at 283 Broadway and opened for business on September 1, 1823, initiating three business practices which he was to follow throughout his career: maintain absolute honesty between buyer and the seller; have one sale price; and insist upon cash on delivery. Because he could not afford to hire help at this time, Stewart was forced to do all the work himself, learning all aspects of the dry-goods business and spending fourteen to eighteen hours a day at the store. Within three years, Stewart was able to move to larger premises at 262 Broadway and, three years later, in 1829, he moved again to 257 Broadway where he remained for seventeen years.

Stewart demonstrated a business and merchandising astuteness that enabled him to amass one of the largest private fortunes in the United States during the 19th century. He was able to take advantage of business situations that other merchants found unfavorable and turn them to his benefit. During the Panic of 1837, while other commercial interests were failing, Stewart sold merchandise that was of high quality and originally high priced at low rates to raise cash and used that capital to buy, at a low price, the inventories of other merchants who had been forced to auction their stock to meet their financial obligations. Stewart emerged from the Panic a millionaire and a merchant with a considerable reputation.

Beginning in 1839, Stewart made annual buying visits to Europe and employed resident buyers for foreign merchants in London and Paris. After 1845, he selected members of the firm as buyers and established his own European buying organization that developed into the largest and most important American import house for European goods.<sup>2</sup>

In early April 1845, work began on clearing the southeast corner of Broadway and Reade Street which Stewart had acquired the previous October. The site had been occupied by Washington Hall, a famous hotel designed by John McComb, which had burned in July 1844. The lot had a frontage of 90 feet on Broadway and extended back into Reade Street for 123 feet. Stewart intended to build on the entire Broadway frontage between Reade and Chambers Streets even though he did not yet own the entire blockfront when he began construction. On September 14, 1846, the New York Herald carried a small advertisement that read:

A.T. Stewart & co. will open their new store on Monday, the 21st inst., at 9 o'clock A.M., with a stock of goods entirely new, which has been selected in Europe for the occasion by one of the partners. A.T.S. & Co. will be most happy to receive the visits of their friends, customers and the public.

When the building opened it stood four stories high with a ground floor of glistening plate-glass that carried three floors of gleaming white marble above it (Fig.1) and was the work of Joseph Trench and John B. Snook.

## The Architects

Alexander T. Stewart probably commissioned the architectural firm of Joseph Trench & Co. for the design of his new store soon after he acquired the site on October 29, 1844.<sup>3</sup> The building was erected in various phases during the 19th century with the first three sections designed and supervised by Trench & Co.<sup>4</sup>

Few details are known about Joseph Trench's (1815-1879) career but it is known that he began his practice in New York in 1837. Five years later he hired John B. Snook (Fig.3) and, either in 1843 or 1844, promoted him to junior partner, the position he held when the firm received the Stewart commission. John Butler Snook was born in London on July 16, 1815, the eldest son of James and Mary (Sayer Smith). In 1817, the family immigrated to the United States, settling in New York City where Snook's father opened a carpentry shop. Snook was educated at the Crosby Street High School which may have been sponsored by the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen and worked for his father as a draftsman and bookkeeper. The elder Snook left New York and relocated to Plainsborough, New Jersey, near Princeton in 1830. John Snook, then 15, remained in New York and was apprenticed to Thomas Gospil, a builder and former business associate of his father. Snook remained with Gospil until 1835 when Gospil left the city and, two years later, Snook established his own practice, then joined Trench in 1842.

After Trench left for California in 1850/51, Snook continued the firm and eventually brought three of his sons and a son-in-law into the practice.<sup>5</sup> On November 1, 1901, after one of the longest and most productive careers of any of New York's 19th-century architects, Snook died of lung congestion and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery. His long career covered a period of extraordinary architectural development and physical growth in New York. His work, consisting of over 500 designs, included commercial buildings, private residences, apartment houses, schools and churches in the various popular revival styles of the period. His early work in association with Trench was his most important and innovative and established him as one of the prominent architects of his day. With the Stewart building, the firm introduced the Italianate style which they derived from contemporary British architects' interpretation of Italian Renaissance palaces. The Stewart building was recognized immediately as a major architectural achievement and was soon imitated by other architects. With their Odd Fellows Hall (1847-48),<sup>6</sup> a monumental, domed structure of brownstone, and the Metropolitan Hotel (1849-52), one of the largest and most luxurious hotels of its day with a complex interior arrangement that incorporated an old and popular outdoor resort, Niblo's Garden, the firm confirmed its position as the leader in the new style which was to transform the appearance of New York in the mid-century.

## The Stewart Store: Its Precursors and Its Effect

The new building Stewart erected to house his dry-goods business was quite different from other mercantile buildings in the city which were unpretentious, low in scale, and of simple materials. The oldest such buildings either had been converted from residential use or had been built to house both a store and residence (Fig.4). Usually constructed of frame and brick with brick used for the front facade, they were of narrow

proportions with simple brownstone decorative details. The front room on the ground floor was used for the store with the family sitting room behind it and the bedrooms on the upper floors. Another type, introduced at the beginning of the 19th century, was the wholly commercial fireproof warehouse, or countinghouse, which had originated in English seaports and became the standard formula for commercial design until the 1830s (Fig.5). The outer walls were built of brick and rose three or four stories above the street and were topped by a pitched roof of slate or tile. Examples of both types of these buildings are still standing in the South Street Seaport Historic District.<sup>7</sup>

In 1829, Ithiel Town adapted the new Greek Revival style architecture for the new store of Lewis and Arthur Tappan on Pearl Street.<sup>8</sup> It was the prototype for the New York commercial building until Stewart opened his store in 1846. After the great fire of 1835 which destroyed most of Manhattan south of Wall Street and west of Broad Street, many of the new commercial buildings followed the Tappan model. The ground floors were trabeated granite with monolithic piers crowned by simple Tuscan capitals. Between these piers, the bays were glazed with multi-paned shop windows. The brick upper floors were pierced by square-headed windows with stone sills and simple cap-molded lintels. Restrained cornices marked the roofs which were either flat or had a slight pitch. The buildings were usually three bays wide, following the standard width of the New York City lot, and three or four stories high, a practical height before the introduction of the elevator. In size, scale, and material, commercial buildings did not differ greatly from domestic rowhouses of the period (Fig.6).

As business grew, a merchant could expand by acquiring adjoining buildings and uniting them internally by breaking through party walls. He could also add new floors to the building and erect a rear extension to the full depth of the lot. The end product may have been a larger building but it could also result in an inefficient use of space, hampered traffic flow, and dark interiors with inadequate ventilation. Stewart followed this traditional way of expanding while he was located at 257 Broadway where he enlarged a two-story structure on a single lot to one double in width and depth, and five stories high. He was well aware of the limitations that this type of haphazard, impractical expansion presented to the continued success of his business.

On his annual buying trips to Europe, Stewart would have noted the new architectural developments taking place. The Industrial Revolution was creating new industries, new wealth, and a new merchant class that demanded a new architectural style for the buildings that housed its industries, secured its wealth, and sheltered its families. In Manchester, the cotton merchants:

...began to demand for [their warehouses] a representational character as impressive as that hitherto reserved for banks and insurance offices. That was because these cotton warehouses were not mere places of storage but the principal seats of their wholesale business to which clients came from all over the world.<sup>9</sup>

The new "representational character" that the cotton merchants found



in the banks and insurance offices was an architectural style based on the palaces of the Italian Renaissance; a style Charles Barry introduced to London with the Travellers' Club (1830-32) (Fig.7) and to Manchester with the Athenaeum (1837) (Fig. 8). This style was distinctly urban in character, quite different from the earlier Italianate mode that produced the picturesque "Italian villas" of the rural and suburban landscape (Fig. 9). The form of this new Italianate style was cubic, flat-roofed, and nearly flat-surfaced (Fig.10) and had the practical advantage of providing a means to expand a building without destroying its aesthetic effect. Once the basic design unit had been established, it could be repeated as often as the owner wished or could afford. The style ideally suited the desires of the modern merchant-prince to express his new-found wealth and prestige in impressive architectural terms. The new palazzo mode was the symbol of modernity from the mills and warehouses of England's industrial northwest to the residential squares and retail shopping streets of London. Within the capital, recently opened streets such as Faringdon Street North and New Oxford Street were lined with blocks of commercial buildings in the new style. Standing three stories above sleek, plate-glass ground floors, these new buildings formed impressive streetscapes (Fig.11).

Stewart, New York's wealthiest merchant-prince, saw what his contemporaries were doing and was the first to bring this new style and attitude back to this country and capitalize on it.<sup>10</sup> From past business ventures, he realized that quality produced profits and novelty sold. His new store would embody both quality and novelty. Based on what is known of Stewart's character, it is likely that the choice of the style, material, and the arrangement of the interior spaces were his and that he worked closely with Trench and Snook who took his ideas and directions and made them reality.

The choice of marble for the facade material was an astute decision. New York was a city of red brick with few buildings of marble or light-colored stone and those that did exist were its most important ones. City Hall, the Custom House (later the Sub-Treasury), the Merchants' Exchange, the Bank of America, the Bank of the United States, the Merchants' Bank, St. Peter's Church (R.C.), Grace Church (P.E.), the Astor House, Lafayette Terrace, et al., were all sheathed with either granite or marble. Within the public mind, marble was associated with seats of wealth and power and this association was recognized by Stewart and used by him for his benefit. The three most prominent buildings, the City Hall which was the center of civil government and political power, the Custom House which was the symbol of the Federal government's presence in the city, and the Merchants' Exchange which was the gathering place of the city's most influential business men, also shared a feature other than facade material. Each had an interior rotunda, a feature Stewart also incorporated within his building and lavishly decorated with frescoes, a balcony promenade, and a wall of immense mirrors imported from France. His novel use of huge sheets of plate-glass for the storefront, seen by some as an extravagant luxury,<sup>11</sup> was in keeping with his intent that Stewart's store would be the embodiment of wealth, luxury, and extravagance.

He succeeded. Almost immediately, Stewart's new marble palace became the favored store of New Yorkers and visitors alike. Former mayor of New York and noted diarist Philip Hone called the store "spacious and

magnificent beyond anything of the kind in the New World, or in the Old."<sup>12</sup> Architectural historian Winston Weisman has stated that it "created architectural repercussions up and down the Atlantic seaboard."<sup>13</sup> Imitators soon followed and, within a few years, Broadway and its side streets became lined with marble, brownstone, and cast-iron commercial palaces.

The change in Broadway was noticed as early as 1852:

The entire length of Broadway seems to have been measured for a new suit of marble and freestone--six and seven story buildings going up on its whole length, of most magnificent elegance in style. . . .Indeed public and private buildings are going up in all directions . . .with Aladin-like splendor and celerity.<sup>14</sup>

The architectural impact Stewart's store had upon New York in the mid-19th century was as strong and influential as the impact that the Lever House would have upon New York in the mid-20th century.<sup>15</sup> Its effect was equally as strong in changing the merchandising techniques of other retailers both in New York and other major American cities.

#### Expansion and Subsequent History

As first built the store occupied the southeast corner of the intersection of Broadway and Reade Street. Its main facade on Broadway was organized into three units, each unit three bays wide, and it was only four stories high. Stewart acquired the remaining property along Broadway between his store and Chambers Street in 1847 but did not begin construction until May 1850. The design by Trench & Snook followed the original scheme of three-bay units, two facing Broadway and three along Chambers Street, and included a fifth floor which was also added to the four-story original building (Fig.12). In 1852-53, Stewart extended the store once more along Chambers and Reade Streets. Again designed by Snook and adhering to the unit scheme, two units were erected on Chambers Street and three on Reade Street. Only two were built on Chambers Street because the owner of the lot next to the 1850-51 addition refused to sell.<sup>16</sup> An important change in materials was made with the 1852-53 extension; cast iron was substituted for marble at the ground floor and, on Reade Street, at both the basement and ground floor. The use of cast iron may have been suggested to Stewart by the warehouses and mills he saw on his trips to the northwest of England where the material was used extensively in the new warehouses. The cast iron in this section of the building was produced by Daniel Badger, an important early advocate for the use of cast-iron facades.<sup>17</sup>

By 1853 with the completion of the third section, the store was doing \$7,000,000 a year in trade. Stewart realized that his marble palace was inadequate to meet the needs of both his retail and wholesale business. In 1859, he began construction of another palazzo, designed by John Kellum, this time of cast iron, which occupied the entire block bounded by Broadway, East 9th and 10th Streets, and Astor Place. When it opened in November of 1862, having cost \$2,750,000, this new store, devoted entirely to the retail business, was the largest such store in the world.<sup>18</sup> The marble store was used only for the wholesale trade.<sup>19</sup>

Stewart died on April 10, 1876, of peritonitis, in his white marble Second Empire mansion, designed by John Kellum, at the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 34th Street. After his death, Stewart's closest friend and advisor, Judge Henry Hilton, served as one of the executors and trustees of the estate, exerting a great deal of influence upon its disposition. It is evident from the subsequent decline of Stewart's vast business interests that Hilton was not competent to carry out his role and that it was really Stewart alone who had run and controlled them.

Hilton gained possession of Stewart's real estate including the marble palace and the cast-iron store. He removed the wholesale operations from the marble store and, for a while, it remained empty. In 1884, Hilton further expanded the building two units along Chambers and Reade Streets, added two stories and converted the interior into an office building.<sup>20</sup> The most famous tenant to occupy the building after Stewart's enterprised was the daily newspaper, The Sun, (see Appendix) which remained in the building between 1919 and 1952, giving it the name by which it remains known today. In 1970 title to the building was acquired by the City of New York which retains ownership.

In the recent past, there had been proposals for the demolition of the building so the cleared site could be included within a master plan for the redevelopment of the Civic Center. Fortunately, the proposals have not been carried out. The building is now occupied by various city agencies and there is an awareness of the important place that the marble palace occupies in the historical and architectural development of the city.

#### Description

By virtue of its location north of City Hall Park on Broadway, the Sun Building enjoys one of the most prominent locations in downtown Manhattan and as a consequence has three fully designed facades, each built in several stages but forming a unified whole.

The Broadway facade was always intended as the main facade and designed accordingly. As seen today it extends along the eastern side of the blockfront between Chambers Street and Reade Street and is composed of five units, each three bays wide. The second and fourth units project slightly forward from the other three. The three northern units date from 1845-46 and the southern two from 1850-51. The ground floor was designed as a colonnade of smooth pilasters, paired at the end of each unit, and at the projecting units, of fluted freestanding columns which distinguished the entrances. Both pilasters and columns had modified Corinthian capitals. The original pilasters, now set on plinths, survive in the northernmost unit, in the northern projecting unit flanking it, and partially in the middle unit. The columns, also set on plinths, which flanked the original building entrance still survive but are no longer fluted and have lost their capitals. The original bays created by this colonnade no longer survive.<sup>21</sup> Modern shop windows have been installed and new recessed entrances created in the northern projecting unit and in the central unit. The two southern units and a portion of the central unit contain a continuous modernized storefront which obliterates all original detail. The ground floor is surmounted by a continuous entablature with simple dentilled cornice.

Above the ground floor the building rises for six marble-faced stories. Rising to the top of the fifth story, each of the units is set off by quoins. The windows of the second, third, fourth, and fifth floors decrease in height with each successive story. All the windows are square-headed and framed with architrave moldings which are "eared" at the second floor; however, the enframements of the windows in the projecting units have "eared" architrave moldings on each floor through the fifth floor. The second floor windows in the projecting units have balustrades at their bases and are crowned by pediments with human mask keystones. The windows in the flanking units have solid panels at their bases and are surmounted by cap cornices. A continuous bandcourse extends across the facade at the height of the balustrades. Cap cornices also crown the third and fourth floor windows. (The fourth floor windows in the 1845-46 section originally did not have cornices; they were added to make the windows appear taller when the building was expanded in 1850-51 all the way to Chambers Street and the fifth floor was added.) These windows and those at the fifth floor have sills resting on small corbels, and stringcourses extend across the facade at sill level on the third and fifth floors. All windows now contain one-over-one double-hung sash.<sup>22</sup> The modillioned cornice crowning the fifth floor appears to be very similar to that which crowned the fourth story of the original building (removed when the fifth story was added).

The sixth and seventh stories were added in 1884, except for the seventh story above the corner units which were not added until 1921. This addition is also of stone with square-headed windows, five in the flanking units, three in the projecting units, flanked by pilasters with Tuscan capitals at the sixth floor and, at the seventh, pilasters with Scamozzi capitals and embossed spandrels over the windows. A cornice surmounts the sixth floor; that at the seventh floor has been recently removed. The building is crowned by balustrades alternating with paneled parapets above the projecting units.

Notable additions at the corners above the ground floor are the copper thermometer and clock with the inscription, "The Sun - It Shines for All."

The Chambers Street facade is now the most visible facade on the building. Like its Broadway counterpart it was built in several stages; it is organized into eight units. The first three extending eastward from Broadway were built in 1850, the next one dates from 1872, the next two were built as part of the third expansion of the store in 1852-53, and the easternmost two are from 1884. The second, fifth, and seventh units are projecting.

As on the Broadway facade the ground floor of the Chambers Street facade was designed as a colonnade with marble columns flanking two entrances in the second and third units and marble pilasters flanking the shop windows. The colonnade of the later sections was continued by cast-iron columns and pilasters. Only one of each of these survive, at the western edge of the seventh unit; the column retains its modified Corinthian capital, the pilaster does not. Otherwise the ground floor has been completely modernized. The continuous cornice surmounting the ground floor survives, although the dentil course is partially covered in the two eastern units (seven and eight).

Above the ground floor the facade rises for six stories of marble. Each of the units is set off by quoins. The ornamental and window details at these stories are like those on the Broadway facade; recessed and flanking units are handled the same as those on the Broadway facade. The only difference comes at the roofline. Above the recently removed seventh story cornice, the paneled parapet extends across all three eastern units (six, seven, and eight), instead of having balustrades above the two non-projecting units.

The Reade Street facade, originally seen as a secondary facade, was also built in several stages. Like the Chambers Street facade it contains eight units, but they are organized somewhat differently reflecting a difference in construction history. The three units extending eastward from Broadway are part of the original 1845-46 store. The next three units were built in 1852-53, while the easternmost two date from 1884. The fifth and seventh units are projecting.

The ground floor treatment is somewhat more complicated than that on the other two facades as a result of the downward slope of the street away from Broadway. The original section of the building contains large windows created by twelve pilasters on plinths of differing heights. These pilasters retain their modified Corinthian capitals. Because of the grade, the tops of the basement windows were originally visible and possibly protected by iron railings. They are now covered by metal grills. The ground floor in this section is surmounted by an entablature with dentilled cornice like that on the Broadway facade. In the units to the east of the original section the ground floor continues in a cast-iron storefront with fluted columns with modified Corinthian capitals. The basement level below this storefront was also built of cast iron, but it was removed sometime in the 20th century, possibly in conjunction with the insertion of the garage which is now underneath a portion of the building. The cast-iron columns support an entablature with dentilled cornice like that to the west although it is not continuous with that cornice.

The Reade Street facade rises in six stories of marble above the ground floor. The major differentiation is in the treatment of the three western units, that is the original store. Here the central unit (two) is not set off by quoins, unlike the other units on this facade, and it is not projecting; also it contains four bays instead of the customary three. Also in the flanking unit to the east (three), the wall space between the windows is noticeably larger than in the other units. This may be the result of a shift in the structural system to allow for the grand interior rotunda which was located here. The pediments above the second floor windows do not contain the carved human masks which are found in the pediments everywhere else on the building. With these exceptions the treatment of the units of this facade, projecting and non-projecting, are consistent with that seen on the other two facades of the building, including the balustrades and paneled parapets at the roofline, although a modern brick penthouse has been added above the two eastern units and the balustrades and parapet removed.

Report prepared by  
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## NOTES

1. The biographical information about Stewart is from: Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 4, part II, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 3-5; Cyclopaedia of American Biography, vol. 5, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 681-683; New York Times, 4/11/1876; 1:1; Harry E. Resseguie, "A.T. Stewart's Marble Palace--The Cradle of the Department Store", The New-York Historical Society Quarterly, 48(April 1964), 131-160; James D. McCabe, Jr., Lights and Shadows of New York Life; or, The Sights and Sensations of The Great City, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971 facsimile edition), 456-469; Henry Collins Brown, ed., Valentine's Manual of Old New York, (New York: Valentine's Manual Inc., 1921, 1923), 100-104, 1921; 193, 1923.
2. Stewart had offices in the major dry-goods centers in Europe and maintained representatives in: Paris on the Rue Bergere; Lyon on Rue de la Bourse; Manchester on Minshull Street; Bradford in Well Street; Nottingham on Station Street; Belfast in Wellington Place; Glasgow on John Street; Berlin on Alte Leipziger Strasse; and Chemnitz on Innere Kloster Strasse. (New York Times, 4/11/1876, 1:1).
3. The information on Trench and Snook is from: Mary Ann Clegg Smith, The Commercial Architecture of John Butler Snook, (Ph. D. dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, 1974), available at The New-York Historical Society; Mary Ann Smith, "John Snook and the Design for A.T. Stewart's Store," The New-York Historical Society Quarterly, 53 (January 1974), 18-33.
4. The responsibility for the design of the first section was attributed by contemporary publications to Stewart himself; Ottaviano Gori, a sculptor; Signor Bragaldi, an artist; and Joseph Trench & Co. Because of the vast influence of the building, its authorship was a matter of intense interest to architectural historians for many years. Mary Ann Smith (see above) was the first to establish Snook as the designer.
5. Snook married Marie Antoinette Weeks on October 25, 1836, and had six daughters and five sons. The family moved from New York to Williamsburg in 1859, then a newly annexed section of the City of Brooklyn, and lived on South 8th Street until 1896 when they moved to the Bedford section. Snook was a member of the Hanover Club in Brooklyn; a member of the Odd Fellows and designed their Manhattan headquarters; served as a director of the Pacific Insurance Co., the Brooklyn Throat Hospital, and the Williamsburg City Fire Insurance Co. He was also a member of the General society of Mechanics and Tradesmen and the American Institute of Architects.
6. Odd Fellows Hall is a designated New York City Landmark, LP-1293, designated August 26, 1982.
7. Landmarks Preservation Commission, South Street Seaport Historic District Designation Report (LP-0948), report prepared by Ann Bedell, (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1977). The district was designated on May 10, 1977.

8. Roger Hale Newton, Town & Davis Architects (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 182-183.
9. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Early Victorian Architecture in Britain, 2 vols. (New York: DaCapo Press, 1972), 375-376.
10. The Philadelphia Athenaeum, designed by John Notman and built in 1845-47 is contemporaneous but was a non-commercial building.
11. Diarist Philip Hone was one: The Diary of Philip Hone (1828-1851), ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1927), p. 772, September 10, 1846.
12. Diary, p. 729, April 7, 1845.
13. Winston Weisman, "Commercial Palaces of New York: 1845-1875," Art Bulletin, 36 (December 1954), 288.
14. Gleason's Pictorial, 3 (November 1, 1852), 371, cited in I.N. Phelps Stokes, The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909 (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915-1929), vol. 4, under heading "1852 Nov. 13."
15. Ellen W. Kramer, "Contemporary Descriptions of New York City and Its Public Architecture ca. 1850," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 27 (December 1968), 270.
16. Stewart was forced to build around it, a situation that R.H. Macy and B. Altman later faced when they erected their department stores in midtown. It was not until 1872, that Stewart was able to obtain the lot and create a solid, unified facade. The architect for this facade is listed as Schmidt, possibly Frederick Schmidt who practiced between 1837 and 1890. (Alt. No. 857-1872.)
17. To a great degree, Badger is responsible for the wealth of cast-iron architecture that New York possesses. It has been written of him that, "No man connected with the business ever did as much as Mr. Badger to popularize the use of cast-iron fronts..." His foundry on East 14th Street between Avenues B and C produced a large number of cast-iron buildings, not only for clients in New York, but for most major cities in this country and for clients as far away as Egypt and Brazil. A published list of his clients includes A.T. Stewart and the information that he provided iron storefronts and a basement designed by J.B. Snook for Stewart's property on Reade and Chambers Streets and that he also supplied rolling iron shutters for the Broadway facade of the store. (See The Origins of Cast Iron Architecture in America, (New York: DaCapo Press, 1970).) Shutters were provided prior to the erection of the 1852-53 addition. An illustration in Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, 1 (July 26, 1851), 201, shows that shutters already existed on the 1845-46 and 1850-51 sections. Their material is unknown. The storefronts on Reade Street are among the oldest cast-iron storefronts remaining in the city.
18. In 1852, Stewart was contemplating a move "uptown" to property bounded by Broadway, Crosby and Houston Streets, just north of the newly opened Metropolitan Hotel in which he was an investor. The marble

palace was to be sold to the U.S. Government for use as a Post Office. (New York Times; 1/7/1853, p.8.)

19. Stewart took particular interest in and was directly involved in the day-to-day activities of his business. He would visit the cast-iron store at East 10th Street each day on his way to his office in the marble store to check on the proceedings of the previous day and address whatever problems may have arisen. Yet, he had no difficulty with delegating responsibility. At one time he had five partners, however, "they were partners in profits, not in the firm's capital structure. To all intents and purposes A.T. Stewart & Co. remained, therefore, during the life of its founder, an individual proprietorship." (See Resseguie, 159) He was just but not generous to his employees. He had them inspected by private detectives on leaving for home after their twelve-hour workday to prevent shoplifting and discourage pilferage. Yet, he did demonstrate a genuine concern for their well-being. When the marble palace was first opened, adjoining it on Reade Street was a boarding house built by Stewart for his staff, and, it even included a library. One of his major real estate ventures was the development of Garden City, Long Island, which originally was intended for families with moderate incomes. At the time of his death, he was involved with the construction of a hotel for working women on Park Avenue between East 32nd and 33rd Streets.
20. The architect was Edward D. Harris. (Alt. No. 1272-1884.)
21. The main entrance, at the base of the projecting unit, was within the middle bay and flanked by columns. Each leaf of the double-leaf door had at its base a solid panel and above, a single sheet of plate-glass measuring approximately 10-1/2 feet by 3-1/2 feet. The bays on either side of the doorway were glazed with single sheets of plate-glass about 11 feet by 7 feet. The other ground floor bays had four-light windows, each light about 5-1/2 feet by 3-1/2 feet. Beneath each bay was a paneled spandrel. The specific facts about the original fabric of the building is taken from Smith and Resseguie.
22. The original windows had metal sash with eight lights at the second and third floors and six at the fourth. It cannot be determined from existing documents if the windows were casements or if they were double-hung and designed to appear as casements which was a common technique for later Italianate buildings. However, it is likely that the windows were double-hung as were those on No. 258-260 Broadway (Fig.13) which was designed as a close copy of Stewart's and erected between 1852 and 1853.

## APPENDIX

### The Sun

The Sun was one of the city's oldest dailies, having been established in September 1833, and was the first successful penny daily in the country.<sup>1</sup> Its owner, founder, and editor was Benjamin Henry Day (1810-1889) who nurtured the paper until it had the largest circulation of any daily in the city. He boasted that his paper had a larger circulation than the The Times of London. Day's innovative approach to the newspaper business included the first use of steam-powered printing presses, the introduction of a feature reporting on the activity of the New York police court, and the use of newsboys to hawk the paper on the streets. The Sun printed "whatever was interesting and readable regardless of its wide significance or recognized importance." Day sold the paper to his brother-in-law, Moses Yale Beach in 1838. Beach (1800-1868) ran the newspaper for ten years during which time he was one of the founders of the New York Associated Press and the developer of the syndicated newspaper article. In 1848, Beach passed the paper to his sons, Alfred Ely (1826-1896) and Moses Sperry (1822-1892). Alfred is probably more famous as an inventor; one of his inventions was the precursor of the city's subway system. He had a block-long tunnel constructed in 1870 under Broadway between Warren and Murray Streets that was actually a pneumatic tube--the passenger car was propelled by forced air rather than by electricity as the subways are today. The experiment was not successful. Alfred combined his skill as an inventor with his journalistic expertise as editor and co-owner of the Scientific American. He withdrew from The Sun in 1852, and his brother, Moses Sperry, became sole proprietor of the paper. For a brief period between 1860 and 1861, Beach sold the newspaper and it became a religious tract reporting on religious meetings, missionary work, and, at the beginning of the Civil War, it advocated the cessation of hostilities on Sundays. The paper returned to Beach and, in 1868, he sold it to a group of investors headed by Charles A. Dana (1819-1897) (Fig.14), under whose leadership the paper achieved even greater success than under the Beaches.

Dana, who in his youth was an adherent of the ideals of the utopian Brook Farm, had spent fifteen years on The Tribune, much of it as managing editor under Horace Greeley. After leaving The Tribune over differences with Greeley, President Lincoln commissioned him as a special observer of the western front and, later, appointed him as Assistant Secretary of War. After the end of hostilities, Dana went to Chicago where he spent a year as editor of the Chicago Republican before he returned to New York.

Under Dana's editorship, assisted by William O. Bartlett, Francis P. Church, and city editor John B. Bogart, The Sun became known as "the newspaperman's newspaper." Bogart is now chiefly remembered for his pithy adage, "When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is news." Church was the author of The Sun's most popular and enduring editorial. In the December 21, 1897, issue of the paper, Church used that day's editorial to respond to a young reader's question of whether or not there was a Santa Claus. Church's answer, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus, " has become part of New York's and the country's Christmas lore.

The Sun under Dana was known for its "colorful, witty and zestful writing" and its editorial page was characterized as a champion of protectionism, an opponent of Tammany Hall, an advocate of an Americanism bordering on jingoism, and a fellow-traveler of conservative business interests and anti-labor. Dana had journeyed quite a distance from Brook Farm. After his death in 1897, Edward P. Mitchell became editor and, in 1916, the paper was bought by Frank Andrew Munsey (Fig. 15).

Munsey (1854-1925) was born in Maine and enjoyed the proverbial history of the self-made man who rose from rags to riches. It was Munsey who moved The Sun into the Stewart building in 1919. He was not a newspaperman but an owner whose career was characterized by a cold, no nonsense, business approach to the field. He was notorious for closing marginal newspapers to either cut losses or remove competition from his more successful properties, and for merging others. In 1916, he merged The Sun with the New York Press, and then The Sun with The Herald. A number of other mergers and absorptions took place so that when The Sun folded, it was actually entitled The New York World, Telegraph and The Sun. Munsey, who ranked along with William Randolph Hearst as one of this century's powerful publishing moguls, never married and produced no heirs. On his death, the bulk of his estate, valued at about \$20 million, was left to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, including the Stewart store. At that time, the building was known as The Sun Building which is still chiselled into the marble over the entrance on Broadway. A copper thermometer and clock erected on the corners of the Broadway facade still remain from The Sun tenancy. Stewart never placed a sign on the building while he owned it--he did not have to, it was one of the most famous structures in the country.

#### NOTES

1. The information on The Sun and the biographical data on the prominent personalities connected with it are collected from: Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism A History of Newspapers in the United States Through 250 Years 1690 to 1940 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), pp.220-224; 373-37; 421-422; 637-653; Dictionary of American Biography, vols. 1, 3, 7 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), vol.1, 80-84, the Beaches; vol. 3, 49-52, Dana; vol. 7, 334-335, Munsey; New York Times, 10/18/1897;1:7.



## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Sun Building has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Sun Building is one of the most influential buildings erected in New York City during the 19th century; that its appearance in 1846 introduced a new architectural mode based on the palaces of the Italian Renaissance; that, designed by the New York architects, Joseph Trench and John B. Snook, it was built by one of the century's greatest merchants, A.T. Stewart; that within the building Stewart began the city's first department store, a type of commercial enterprise which was to have a great effect on the city's economic growth and which would change the way of merchandising in this country; that the image of the Renaissance palace conveyed by the building reflected a new, more conspicuous, image on the part of the city's wealthy merchants and captured the imagination of the public; that the building set a style and form for mercantile buildings that lasted into the 20th century; and that the Sun Building is an important milestone in the development of American architecture and a dignified memorial to A.T. Stewart, one of the city's most respected 19th-century businessmen.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Sun Building, 280 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 153, Lot 1 in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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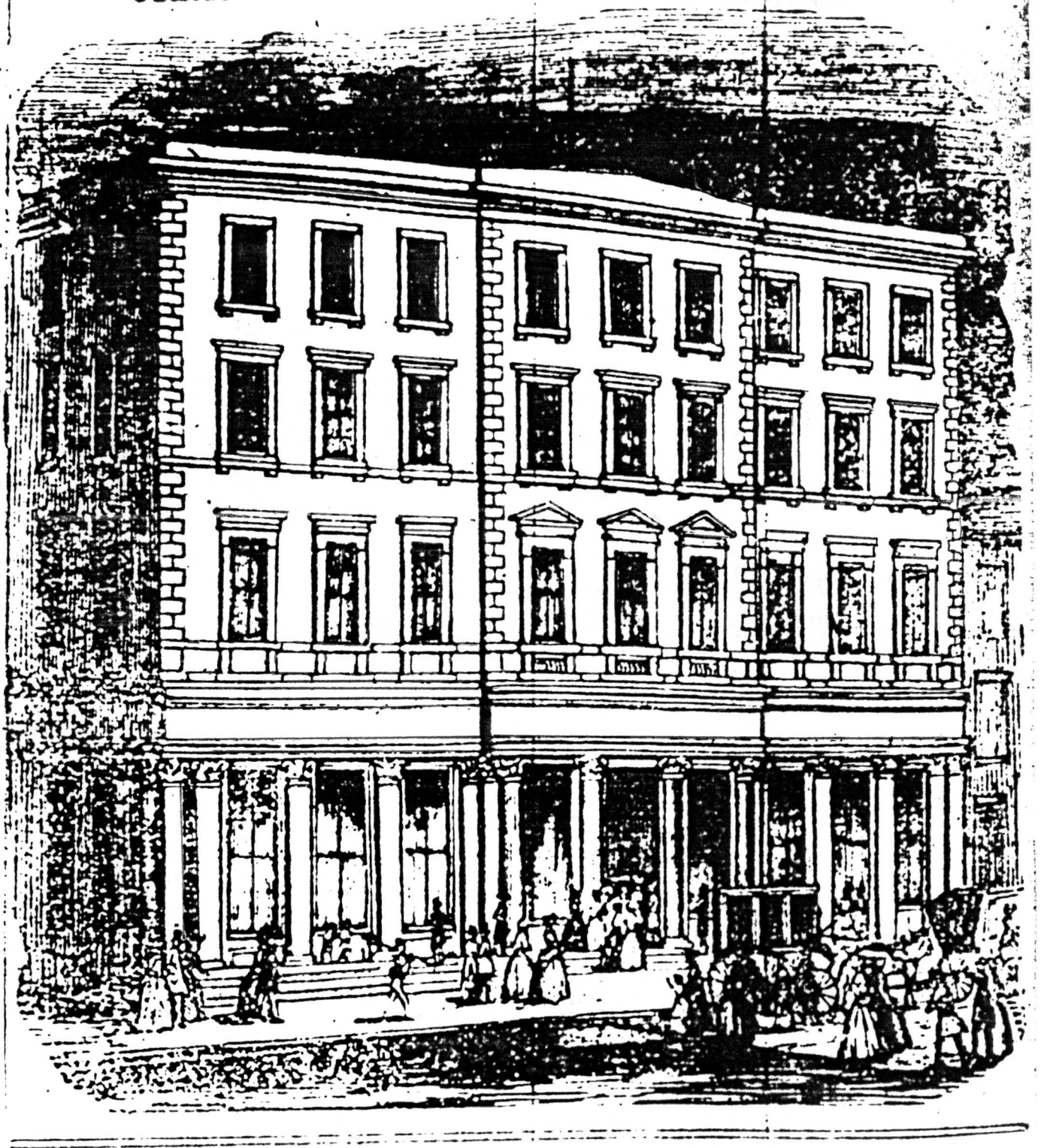
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# FASHIONABLE SHOPPING IN NEW YORK.

Outside View of Stewart's New Palace in Broadway.



FIRST SECTION OF THE MARBLE PALACE, 280 BROADWAY

From *The New York Herald*, September 26, 1846.

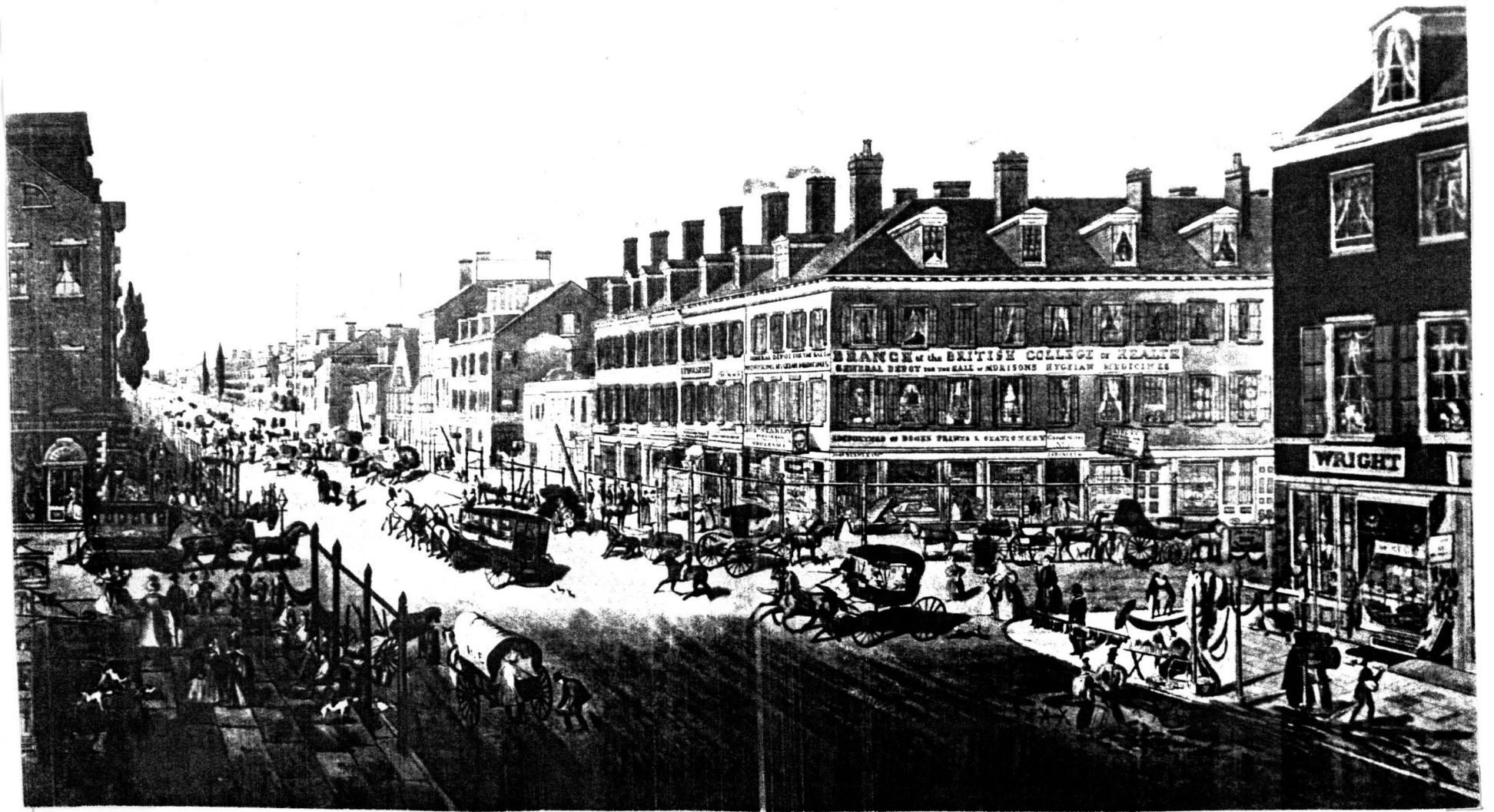


Alexander T. Stewart  
(Fig. 2)

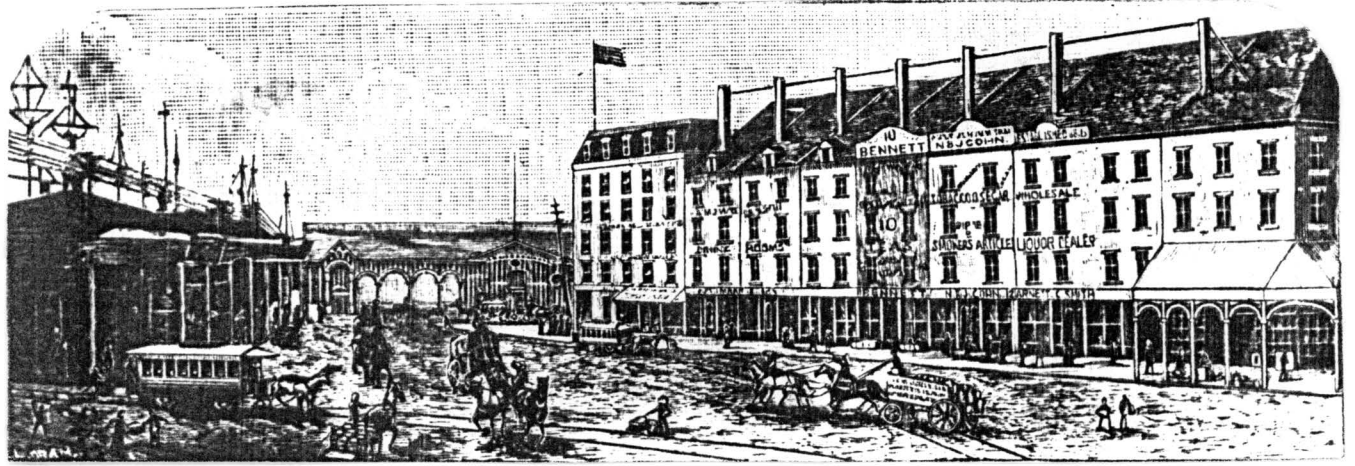


John B. Snook  
(Fig. 3)





Residences converted to businesses  
(Fig. 4)

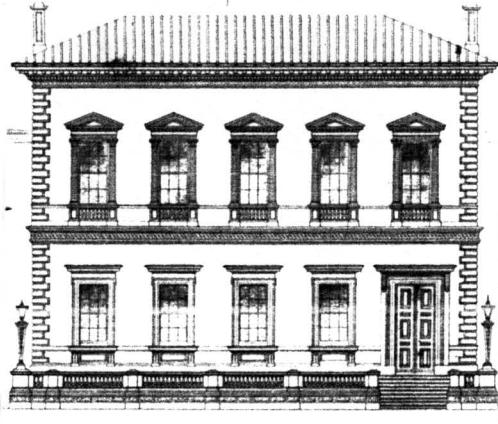


Schermerhorn Row Counting Houses  
(Fig. 5)

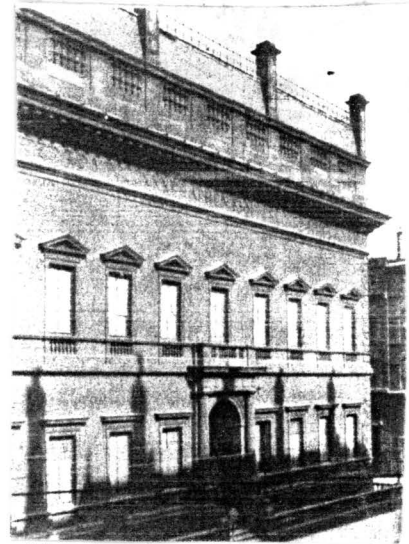
**LIBERTY STREET,**  
Near **BROADWAY** NEW YORK.



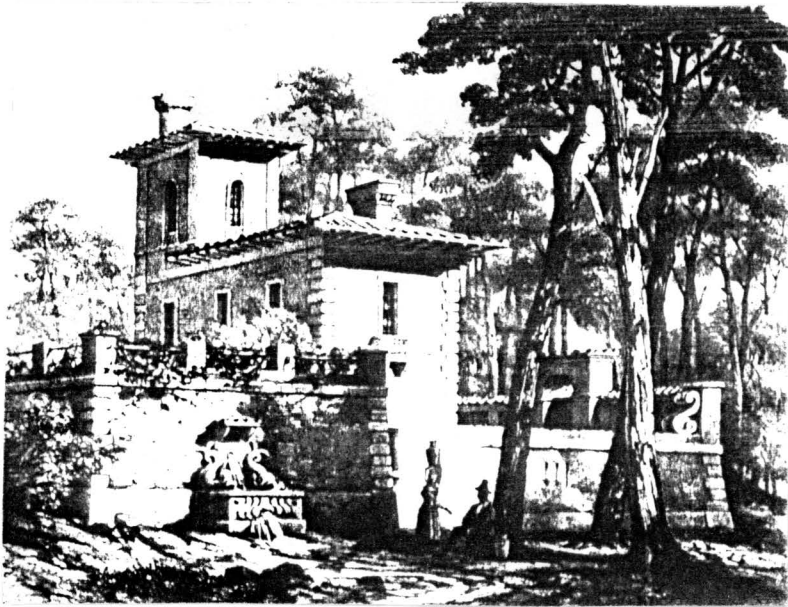
Tappan Style Stores  
(Fig. 6)



The Travellers' Club  
(Fig. 7)



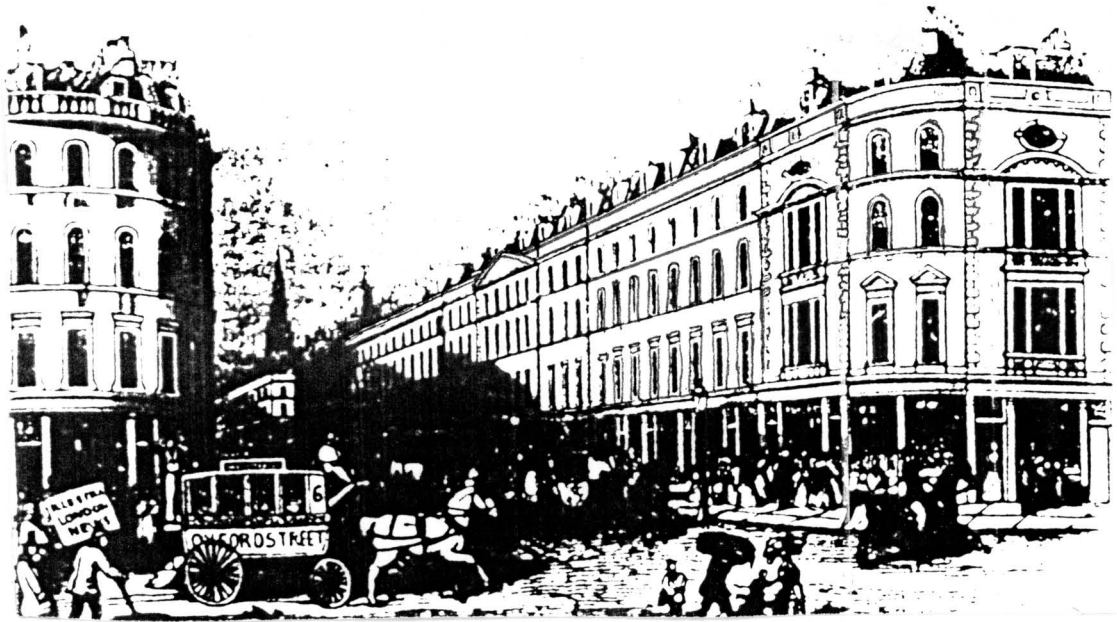
Manchester Athenaeum  
(Fig. 8)



"Italian Villa"  
(Fig. 9)



New Palazzo Mode  
(Fig. 10)

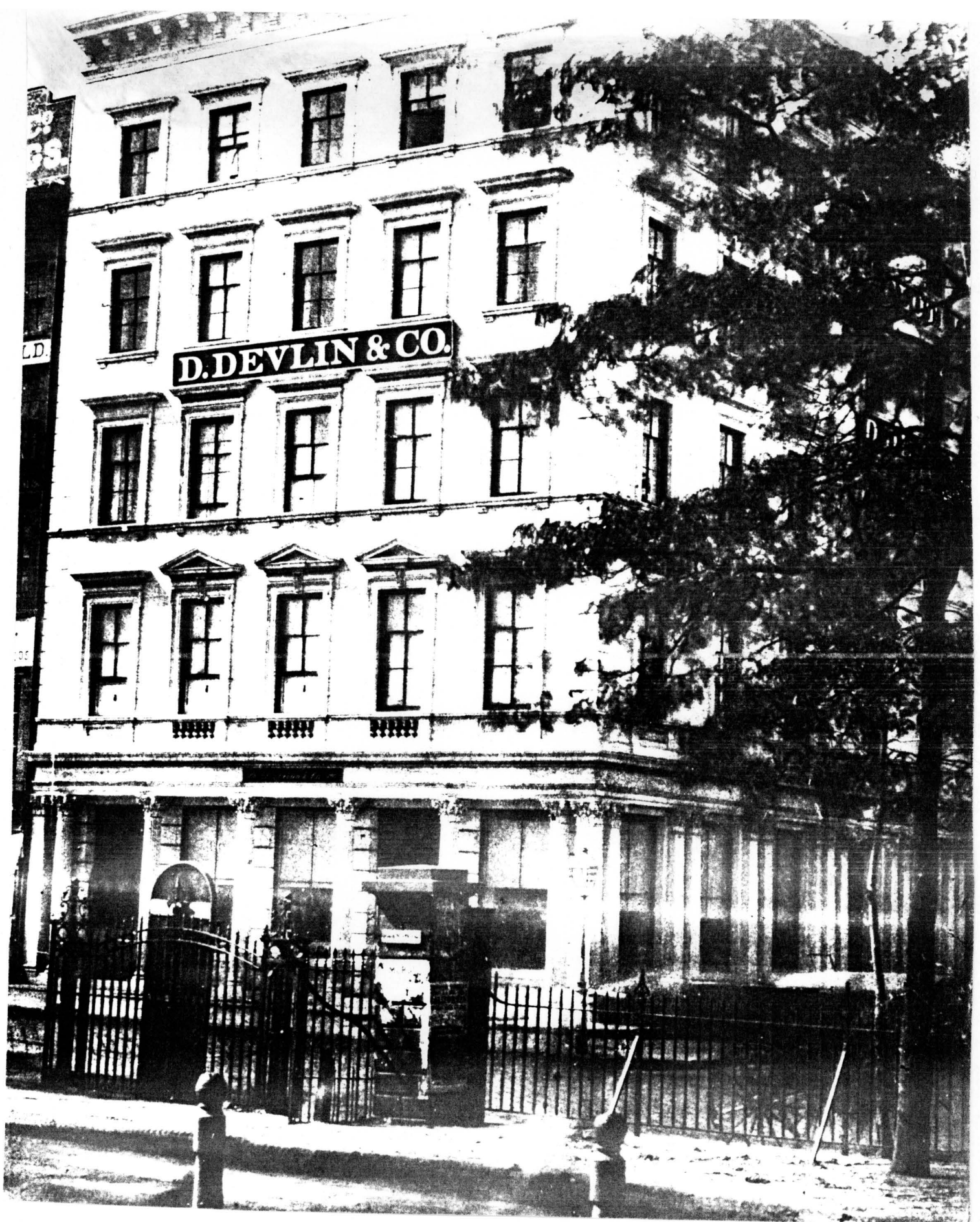


Faringdon Street North  
(Fig. 11)



Stewart's Marble Palace 1853  
(Fig. 12)





No. 258-260 Broadway 1854  
(Fig. 13)





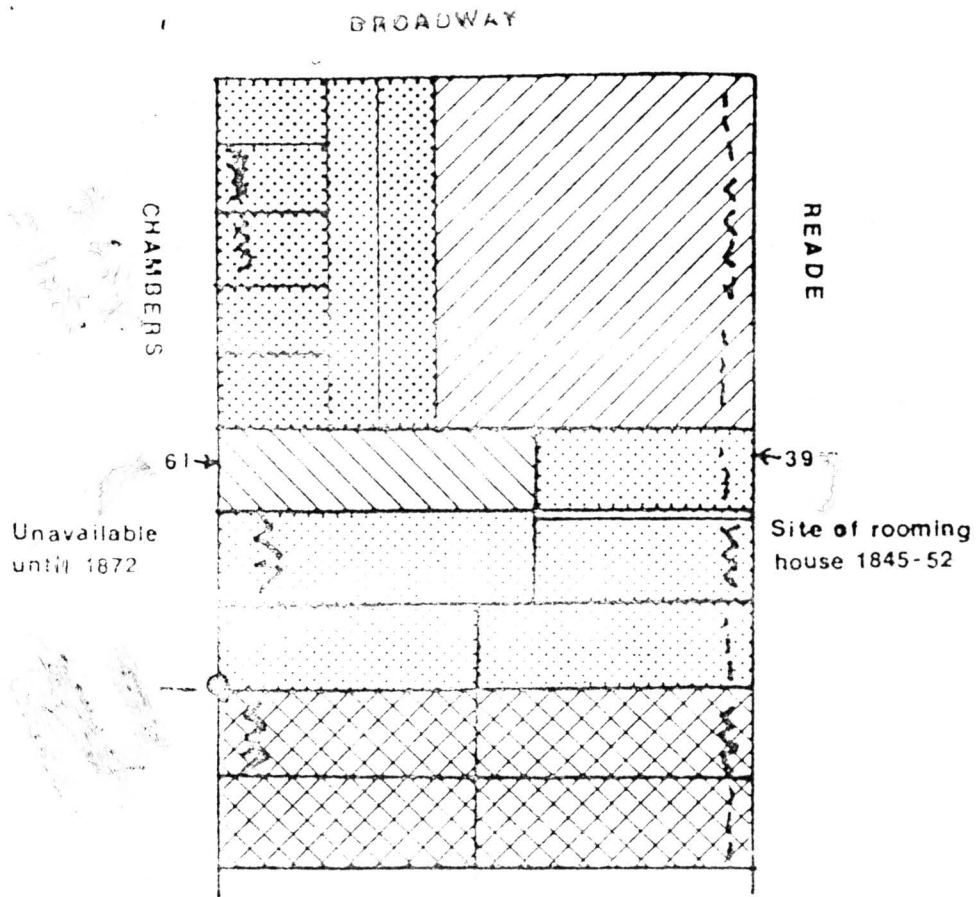
Charles A. Dana  
(Fig. 14)








Frank A. Munsey  
(Fig. 15)



The Stewart Building 1903  
(Fig. 16)



-  Original store - 1845-46 - 90'3" on Broadway; 100'9" on Reade
-  Addition - 1850-51 - 61'0" on Broadway; 100'0" on Chambers
-  Addition - 1852-53 - 52'0" on Chambers; 75'3" on Reade
-  Addition - 1872 - 24'0" on Chambers
-  Addition - 1884 - 49'0" on Chambers; 49'0" on Reade

Data from Sixth Ward Tax Map

SCALE 1" = 60'0"

### Plot Plan of Stewart Store

(From: Smith, New York Historical Society Quarterly)





SUN BUILDING, Chambers Street Elevation

Photo: R. Schwartz  
LPC





SUN BUILDING, Reade Street Elevation

Photo: A.W. Robins  
LPC