

Landmarks Preservation Commission
November 1, 1988; Designation List 211
LP-1566

PARAMOUNT BUILDING, 1493-1501 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1926-27; architects Rapp & Rapp.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 29.

On November 12, 1985, The Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Paramount Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 21). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Two witnesses (representing the owner) spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission has received one letter in favor of and one letter opposed to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

Located in the heart of Times Square, the Paramount Building made a significant contribution to the development of the world-famous theater and entertainment district. Built in 1926-27 and designed by the firm of Rapp & Rapp, who were among the best-known and most prolific designers of elaborate movie theaters in the 1920s, it served as the Eastern headquarters for the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, (forerunner of Paramount Pictures), whose entrepreneurial founders played a major role in promoting the revolutionary motion picture medium. The building's distinctive massing is exemplary of the innovative setback skyscraper type of the 1920s, while the ornamental details are classically inspired, a hallmark of Rapp & Rapp's style. The striking silhouette of the upper stories is enhanced by four giant clock faces, which were conceived to create a memorable image of the the Paramount trademark in the minds of moviegoers, and a crowning glass globe. The Paramount Building, which once housed the Paramount Theater, stands as as an important reminder of Times Square's boom in the 1920s during the early years of the motion picture industry.

The History of Times Square¹

The Times Square area, recognized world-wide as a major entertainment center, has played an important role in the cultural life of New York City in the twentieth century. Known today as the Broadway theater district, this area encompasses the largest concentration of legitimate playhouses in the world. With the meteoric rise of the the motion picture industry, Times Square in the 1920s was also transformed by the arrival of elaborate and luxurious movie theaters, or "palaces," which celebrated this popular and new form of entertainment. Complete with fashionable hotels such as the Hotel Astor (demolished), restaurants, and dance halls, Times Square began early in this century to attract visitors and New Yorkers alike to its thriving night life. The area also became home to scenery, lighting, and costume companies, and the offices of agents and producers, thus creating a

busy hub of activity in all branches of the entertainment business. It was fitting, therefore, that the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, (now Paramount Pictures) while still in its infancy selected Times Square for its East Coast headquarters and showcase theater.

The development of the Times Square area was primarily a result of the steady northward movement of Manhattan's population, abetted by the growth of mass transportation. A district of farmlands and rural summer homes in the early 1800s, Long Acre Square (now Times Square) evolved into an urban center following the opening of the Grand Central Depot and the completion of the Third and Sixth Avenue Elevated Railways in 1871. In 1904, New York's subway system began operation, with a major station at Broadway and 42nd Street. At this time, the area was also renamed Times Square in honor of the recently erected Times Building.²

The theater district, which had existed in the midst of stores, hotels, and commercial buildings along lower Broadway for most of the nineteenth century, moved northward along Broadway in stages, locating first at Union Square, then Madison Square, and then Herald Square. By the end of the century, the district was extended even further north by far-sighted theater managers, such as Oscar Hammerstein, who opened the Lyric in his Olympia Theater complex on Broadway between 44th and 45th Streets in 1895.³ Before the installation of electric street lamps, Long Acre Square, which had been chiefly occupied by carriage shops and livery stables, was a dark and dangerous area popularly known as "Thieves' Lair." By the 1920s, the peak of Times Square development, the Con Edison Company estimated that one million lightbulbs were contained within the famous marquees, signboards, and advertisements that lit up what had come to be known as the Great White Way.⁴ This phrase is credited to an advertising businessman named O.J. Gude, who recognized the exciting potential of electric sign display by installing the first in 1901, on Broadway and 23rd Street, which advertised a seaside resort.⁵ Apart from periods during the World Wars, the brilliant streams of light and color have continued to emanate from Times Square.

The Client: The Paramount Corporation⁶

Forerunner of Paramount Pictures, the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation was headed by some of the most enterprising entertainment entrepreneurs of the century. It was formed in 1916 when the Famous Players Film Company and the Jesse L. Lasky Film Company merged. (In the early 1920s, the Paramount name and trademark began to appear in advertising and publicity, although the name was not officially changed to the Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation until 1928; the office building and theater in Times Square were always known by the Paramount name).

The Famous Players Film Company, founded in 1912, was masterminded by Adolph Zukor and Daniel Frohman. Zukor, who arrived in New York from Hungary in 1888, had established a successful fur business in Chicago by the turn of the century. Prompted by another furrier, Marcus Loew, (who later became president of Loew's Inc., parent company of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer), Zukor returned to New York to invest in penny arcades with the Automatic Vaudeville Company, opening their first arcade on Union Square in 1903. Zukor and his partners soon expanded to nickelodeons and variety shows combining one-reel films with stage acts and scenic effects. Set on

developing the potential of the feature film, the aggressive Zukor broke ties with his colleagues and went to Paris in 1912 to buy the rights to the highly acclaimed film, "Queen Elizabeth," starring the famous dramatic actress, Sarah Bernhardt. He then approached Daniel Frohman, a Broadway producer and theater owner, to arrange for a premiere--the first American showing of a feature-length film--at the Lyceum Theater. This showing was significant in the evolution of the American motion picture industry, for it helped to establish the movie as a socially acceptable form of entertainment with recognized, legitimate actors. Zukor then founded the Famous Players Film Company, with Frohman a liaison to the theater world. Within four years, the two men had a commanding share of the motion picture business, having signed the first two of their big stars, John Barrymore, an established stage actor, and Mary Pickford, a young actress for whom Frohman saw a future on the silver screen.⁷

Jesse L. Lasky started on the vaudeville circuit playing the cornet in an act with his sister, but soon became a vaudeville agent and producer. In 1912, he collaborated with Cecil Blount De Mille in writing and staging an operetta, "California." Lasky's brother-in-law, Samuel Goldwyn, (formerly Goldfish), then persuaded Lasky to enter the motion picture field, and in 1913, the Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company was founded, with Lasky as president, De Mille as director/producer, and Goldwyn as general manager. Their first film, "The Squaw Man," was followed by several highly successful films, establishing the company's reputation for superior entertainment.⁸

For three years, Zukor and Lasky competed for big-name talent and the favor of the burgeoning motion picture audience. In 1916, the two moguls ended their rivalry by joining forces, and the companies merged to form the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation; having the upper hand, Zukor became president and made Lasky vice-president. Shortly thereafter, the new corporation acquired the Paramount Company, a film distribution organization, and gained control of both production and marketing of a seemingly endless supply of motion pictures. In the 1920s, the corporation also acquired theater chains, most notably the large Balaban & Katz circuit of Chicago. Sam Katz continued as head of the theater division, which grew to encompass over two thousand theaters, under the name of Publix. By adding exhibition management to their interests, Paramount had virtually autonomous command over all aspects of the industry, prompting several federal investigations for violation of anti-trust laws during the 1920s.⁹

Paramount established headquarters in both Hollywood and New York, taking advantage of California's excellent climatic conditions for production and New York's acting and literary talent. From the offices of the Paramount Building, the executives scouted for talent, and obtained pictorial rights to plays and novels as well as new dramatic material. The firm had also built its eastern studio in Astoria, Queens in 1920-21, (a designated New York City Landmark), which was used by Paramount until 1932 for rehearsals, short feature filming, and screen-testing.

Paramount had many successes in the 1920s, adding such famous silent-screen stars to their roster as Gloria Swanson, Rudolf Valentino, Clara Bow, and Pola Negri. In 1928, the transition to "talkies" was made, first by adding sound to silent films and then by using the sound-on-film Movietone system. Among the Paramount stars who became famous with the

introduction of sound were Gary Cooper, William Powell, Mae West and Claudette Colbert. As prosperous as these years were, however, the company went into receivership in 1933 as a result of the Great Depression. Two years later, the enterprise re-emerged; after management battles, Lasky was fired and Zukor became the intrepid chairman of the board of Paramount Pictures, Inc., (now owned by Gulf & Western).¹⁰ Zukor later acquired the titles of honorary chairman and then chairman emeritus, maintaining an interest in his movie empire until the time of his death in 1976, at 103 years of age.

The Architects: Rapp & Rapp

The architects of the Paramount Building and Theater, Cornelius Ward Rapp (1861-1927) and George Leslie Rapp (1878-1942), were among the best-known and most prolific designers of imaginative and palatial movie houses in this country during the 1920s. The brothers were the sons of a carpenter-architect in Carbondale, Illinois. C.W. Rapp began as an assistant to his father, and opened his own Chicago practice around 1891. George Rapp graduated from the University of Illinois School of Architecture in 1899 and then spent some time abroad--particularly in Paris--studying the monuments. He later worked in the office of the Chicago architect, Edward Krause, preparing plans for the Majestic Theater.

The brothers formed a partnership in 1906, and the firm of Rapp & Rapp soon specialized in the design of elaborate movie theaters. In 1916, they began an association with the large, Chicago-based Balaban & Katz movie theater chain, with the commission for the Central Park Theater. Among their other commissions in Chicago were the influential Chicago and Tivoli theaters, (both 1921), and the Uptown Theater, (1925). These early designs served as models for the lavish "movie palace" type, characterized by "eye-bugging opulence."¹¹ When Balaban & Katz were acquired by Paramount in 1925, Rapp & Rapp became the architects for the new theater chain, Publix. The Paramount Building and Theater was their first eastern commission; at this time, the firm opened a New York office in the Times Annex. C.W. Rapp died before this project was completed, but the firm went on to design over 400 theaters nation-wide; other commissions in New York included the Brooklyn Paramount and the Loew's Kings, (1929), originally a Paramount theater. Most theater designs were derived from eight schematic types, modified to suit the requirements of each program.¹² Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French architecture, such as Charles Garnier's Beaux-Arts style Paris Opera, provided the primary sources for their classically-inspired designs.

Among Rapp & Rapp's other commissions are the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota, ornamented with corn stalk motifs; the Bismark Hotel and Theater and the Windemere Hotel in Chicago; the Leland Hotel in Detroit; and the National Press Club Building in Washington, D.C. George Rapp also served as consulting architect on Radio City Music Hall (a designated New York City Landmark). He retired in 1938.¹³

The Setback Skyscraper of the 1920s

The 1920s were marked by a boom in commercial development in New York, as large corporations took advantage of their economic strength and financed many skyscrapers. Between 1925 and 1933, 138 new office buildings

were constructed in Manhattan, an average of 15.3 per year.¹⁴

Many of the new buildings erected in Manhattan in the 1920s were designed in the Art Deco style, which seemed to echo the excitement and modernity of the "Jazz Age."¹⁵ This style, characterized by simple, sleek lines, geometric forms, and flattened ornamental patterns, was derived from several sources, the best-known being the 1925 Paris exhibition from which the style took its name--the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Another influence was the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen's second-place winning submission to the 1922 competition for the Chicago Tribune Building, with its streamlined, vertical treatment and lack of cornices. These sources of inspiration had a tremendous international impact on architecture and interior design.

The most direct influence on the form of the Art Deco, setback skyscraper in New York was the New York City Zoning Resolution of 1916, an ordinance which placed height restrictions on buildings at the street line, determined by varying multiples of the street width, above which the building was required to set back at certain levels. The Resolution was introduced to ensure that light and air would reach the street, while also providing better interior conditions. Interpretive drawings relating to this ordinance were published in 1922-23 by the architectural renderer, Hugh Ferriss, based on diagrams by the architect Harvey Wiley Corbett. These important drawings served as a basic formulation of what became the characteristic massing of the setback skyscraper. The overall design of the Paramount Building, although its ornament is more inspired by the Beaux-Arts style than it is by the Art Deco, is derived from the innovative models of the time.

The silhouette of the setback skyscraper also drew comparison with ancient architectural models, such as the Mesopotamian ziggurat, the Egyptian stepped pyramid, and the Mayan temple, in which there was an awakened interest in the 1920s.¹⁶ Francisco Mujica, an architect who studied the ruins in Central America, commented about the Paramount Building that "there are few more eloquent examples to demonstrate that the set back system...resembles...the primitive pyramids of America."¹⁷

The Paramount Building is indeed exemplary of the tiered skyscraper type of the 1920s. The pyramidal massing of the upper stories was also claimed to be advantageous from a real estate perspective, producing a variety of floor areas that offer "a wide choice of space for firms who choose to locate their business offices in one story and would like a story to themselves."¹⁸

Construction and Design

At thirty-three stories with a clock tower, the Paramount Building when erected was the tallest structure on Broadway north of the Woolworth Building. Six of the largest floors were devoted to the offices of the Paramount Company. In the 1926 Paramount Pep Club Yearbook, the organization expressed pride in its conspicuous new headquarters and presaged its cultural significance:

At the crossroads of the world the new Paramount Building is rising. For generations yet unborn it will stand as a monument

to the motion picture industry and as an ever-lasting tribute to the vision and genius of a leader.¹⁹

The Paramount executives were clearly committed to creating a symbol of the company's role in promoting a revolutionary entertainment medium, the motion picture.

The original lighting scheme of the Paramount Building reflects the client's desire to create a memorable image in the minds of moviegoers, as well as the contribution made by Paramount to the development of Times Square. By the mid-1920s, imaginative lighting and signage had already become a distinctive attribute of the busy theater district and a major tourist attraction. In addition to the large and brightly lit Paramount Theater marquee, once located near the southern end of the Broadway facade, the entire structure was a nighttime tableau of light. The setbacks were fitted with floodlights placed behind the parapets at each level so that the stepped silhouette of the building was dramatically displayed. These setbacks culminate in a tower with clock faces on all four sides, of which the hands and the five-pointed stars marking the hours were lit as well. The well-known Paramount trademark--a ring of five-pointed stars surrounding a mountain peak--is recalled in the design of the clocks, which cap, symbolically, a "mountain-like" building. An early rendering shows the clock faces with depictions of mountain peaks, but this was not carried out.²⁰ Crowning the tower is a glass globe which, when illuminated at night, was visible for miles.

This globe was meant to represent "the worldwide activities of Paramount."²¹ The clocks, equipped with chimes, and the globe were synchronized so that light would flash in white or red to tell the time at night. The globe would flash on and off to indicate the hour. On the quarter-hour, the globe would flash once, then twice on the half-hour, and three times at three-quarters of an hour, remaining lit in between.²²

The site of the Paramount Building was assembled in 1922 when the 1493 Broadway Corporation, of which Zukor was president, purchased the property, formerly among the holdings of the Astor estate, from an intermediate realtor. Zukor subsequently leased the property to the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation on twenty-one year terms.

The property encompassed the six-story commercial Putnam Building, which occupied Broadway between 43rd and 44th Streets, and the rear plot which was the site of Westover Court, ten four-story houses which had been converted to bachelor apartments. The Putnam Building was so named to commemorate the spot at which George Washington met with General Israel Putnam during the Revolutionary War.²³

Plans for the 13.5 million dollar theater and office building were filed in April of 1925. The twelve-story theater wing to the rear of the tower was completed first; the theater, which seated approximately 3600 people, opened in November of 1926, although the office building was not completed until Spring of the following year. Early reports indicate that the building was to have twenty-nine stories, rather than thirty-three, and these illustrate renderings of the building without its glass globe, which was conceived in the course of construction.²⁴ In November of 1927, glass-enclosed observation decks were added to the north and south sides of the

topmost setback; these have since been removed.²⁵

Much fanfare surrounded the construction of the Paramount Building and Theater. For the first time in history, a film record of the progress of a building's construction was made by the enthusiastic clients.²⁶ Among the remarkable aspects of the construction documented on film was the setting of eight, 122-foot long trusses which supported the roof of the theater's auditorium. Each truss weighed 144 tons and was hoisted 115 feet above the projected theater stage. The Thompson-Starrett Company, general contractor for the commission, designed travelling derricks that moved on steel rollers and supported the cranes which performed the unprecedented weight-lifting feat.²⁷

The New York Times reported the dedication ceremony of the building in May of 1926, at which Mayor Walker laid the cornerstone; contained within copper boxes sealed in the cornerstone are the front pages of New York morning newspapers, three five-dollar gold pieces, two feature films, and news reels of Admiral Byrd's Polar expedition. In addition to various speeches made by notable New Yorkers and members of the motion picture industry at the ceremony, a letter of congratulations from Thomas Edison was read.²⁸

Description

The Paramount Building occupies the entire 200-foot block front on the west side of Broadway between 43rd and 44th Streets, and extends 207 feet on the side streets. Clad in beige brick with a base and trim of contrasting limestone, the building is composed of two sections: a thirty-three-story setback skyscraper with a clock tower, fronting on Broadway, and a lower wing to the rear, (which once housed the Paramount Theater). Although the Paramount Building's ornamental details are largely inspired by the French Beaux-Arts style, its massing reflects a modern current in 1920s office building design, characterized by a series of setbacks on all four sides.

A continuous five-story base joins the two sections of the building. Above ground floor storefronts (not original), rise three-story rusticated limestone piers framing large, tripartite windows. These have iron mullions and spandrels ornamented with classical moldings, festoons, masks, scrolls, and figural motifs relating to the theater.

A bronze double-height main entranceway, located just north of the center of the Broadway facade, is set in a simple limestone enframingent with a projecting lintel. The distinctive entranceway has the same tripartite configuration as the windows at the base level, with a central, revolving door and two single doors of glass framed in brass. These are surmounted by decorative cresting and a clock framed by two scrolled brackets, topped by such classical motifs as a bearded, theatrical mask, horns, and an urn. Above the doors are two tripartite windows separated by brass mullions and spandrel panels also featuring classical and theatrical motifs. The central panel has an oval cartouche surrounded by foliage containing comedy and tragedy masks in profile and a three-part horn. Musical instruments and masks also embellish the two side panels.

One story of one-over-one, metal-clad windows framed by festooned,

oval cartouches caps the base and makes a transition to the brick-faced upper portion of the building, where one-over-one, metal-clad windows are divided into bays by a rhythm of plain and rusticated piers. The vertical emphasis is visually continued in the upper setback stories, where the rusticated piers project from the building. These piers, grouped in pairs, culminate in trapezoidal stone finials at the setbacks.

The massing of the upper stories is distinguished by six setbacks, stepping back regularly from the eighteenth story on the Broadway facade and side elevations. The rear elevation rises to the twenty-sixth story before stepping back to the twenty-eighth story, where it sets back sharply, forming a portion only two bays deep located toward the front of the building which rises from this level.

Paneled stone parapets and trapezoidal finials highlight the setbacks. Flanking the sides between the twenty-eighth and thirtieth stories, overscaled consoles give the building a sculptural silhouette and make a transition to the clock tower.

On the Broadway facade and rear elevation, the clocks, approximately two stories high, are faced in limestone. These clocks have round glass panels, flush with the stone, which are inset with stars marking the hours, and protruding metal hands. They are flanked by the uppermost setback, which at the front and rear of the building is articulated by large, oval stone cartouches framed by rusticated piers. Affixed to the side elevations at this level are metal-framed clocks, of the same design but slightly smaller and one story lower than those front and rear.

A stone base for the glass globe capping the building surmounts the clocks; it is ornamented with a stylized wave frieze and four trapezoidal finials at the corners. The globe, constructed of ninety panes of glass encased in copper and measuring nineteen feet in diameter, is set on a molded copper pedestal.

The rear wing of the Paramount Building, visible on 43rd and 44th Streets, is articulated by plain piers separating double-hung windows above the continuous base. The ninth story has no windows. On 43rd Street, the rear wing rises twelve stories and features a row of classical cartouches at the parapet. On 44th Street, this section rises nine stories; the parapet has a row of festooned, oval openings, with three acroteria at regular intervals above. These are in the form of convex oval cartouches with decorative surrounds. The westernmost bay on 44th Street rises to twelve stories, sets back to fourteen, and is marked by stone detailing at the top of each level.

Alterations to the Paramount Building were made in 1966-69, when the rear section was converted from the theater to additional office space. The architectural firm of Herbert Fleischer Associates was responsible for the alteration. The arched entranceway to the theater and its elaborate marquee, which had been on Broadway near the 43rd Street corner, were removed. The facade was reconstructed to match the material and composition of the limestone base of the building. Blank limestone remains at the top of the base where the arch of the entranceway had been. Two sets of original iron spandrels were removed from around the corner on the 43rd Street elevation and relocated in place of the theater entrance.

These were replaced on 43rd Street by metal spandrels, of the same color and configuration as the original but unornamented. The same type of replacement window framing was used on the 43rd and 44th Street elevations of the rear wing.

Subsequent History

In the 1940s, the Paramount Theater became a showcase for big bands and entertainers such as Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, and Frank Sinatra, who catered to the "bobby-soxer" crowd. With the advent of television, the movie palace declined in popularity, and soon many large and luxurious theaters in New York were demolished or converted to other uses. In 1964, the Paramount Theater closed, and its immense space was converted for office use in 1966-69.

The Paramount Building has remained in use as an office building, although Paramount Pictures no longer maintains offices there. A striking reminder of Times Square's boom in the 1920s, and of a founding force behind the motion picture industry, the Paramount Building stands as a important symbol of New York's architectural and cultural past.

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NOTES

1. This discussion of the history of Times Square is based in part on LPC, Mark Hellinger Theater Designation Report, report supervised and edited by Anthony W. Robins (New York, 1987).
2. W.G. Rogers and Mildred Weston, Carnival Crossroads (New York, 1960), 39-78; Howard B. Furer, New York (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., 1974), 34; and WPA, New York City Guide (1939; rpt. New York, 1970), 167-71.
3. Mary Henderson, The City and the Theatre (Clifton, N.J., 1973), 130-31, 168-70.
4. Robert A.M. Stern, et al., New York 1930 (New York, 1987), 229.
5. WPA, 170-71.
6. This discussion of the history of the Paramount Company is based in part on LPC, Paramount Studios, Building No. 1 Designation Report (New York, 1978). See also John Douglas Eames, The Paramount Story (New York, 1985); and Adolph Zukor obituary, New York Times, June 16, 1976.
7. Eames, 7-9.
8. Eames, 9-10.
9. "700 Movie Houses Under One Control," NYT, Sept. 18, 1925, p.25.
10. Eames, 36-37.
11. Ben M. Hall, The Best Remaining Seats (New York, 1961), 136.
12. "Rapp & Rapp," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, ed. Adolf K. Placzek, vol. 3 (New York, 1982), 532. See also, C.W. Rapp & George L. Rapp, Inc., The Recent Work of C.W. and George L. Rapp (New York, 1927), illus.
13. Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, "Rapp, George L.," Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles, 1970), 497.
14. Real Estate Board of New York, Inc., Research Dept., Office Building Construction, Manhatttan, 1901-1953, Supplement 5, 1957, n.p., quoted in LPC, Fuller Building Designation Report (New York, 1986). Report prepared by Virginia Kurshan.
15. This discussion of the Art Deco style is based in part on LPC, Fuller Building Designation Report. See also Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter, Skyscraper Style (New York, 1975), 3-24, illus.; and Stern, 23, 27.
16. Stern, 507-13.
17. Francisco Mujica, The History of the Skyscraper (1929; rpt. New York, 1977), quoted in Stern, 513.

18. "The Paramount Building and Theater," Architecture and Building 59, no.1 (Jan., 1927), 3. See also, "A Series of Buildings...Showing Setbacks as influenced by Zoning Law," American Architect 130 (July 5, 1926), 17-20.
19. Paramount Pep Club Yearbook 1926, excerpted in The Theatre Historical Society Annual, A-3 (1976), 3.
20. "Paramount Building," plans and drawings, (Billy Rose Theater Collection, New York Public Library, Lincoln Center, New York).
21. Inaugural Program of the Paramount Theater (New York, 1926), from scrapbook, (Billy Rose Theater Collection, New York Public Library, Lincoln Center, New York).
22. "Huge Ball to Tell Time," NYT, Sept. 1, 1926, p.5, and "Huge Dome Throws Light to Suburbs," NYT, June 10, 1927, p.16.
23. "The Famous Players-Lasky Corporation to Proceed with Big Times Square Project," NYT, Mar. 8, 1925, sec.9, p.6; "29-Story Playhouse for Times Square," NYT, Apr. 19, 1925, p.1; and "Big Improvements in Times Square," NYT, Sept. 27, 1925, sec.10, p.1.
24. NYT, May 24, 1925, sec.2, p.1, illus., and Real Estate Record and Guide 115, no. 16 (Aug. 18, 1925), 9.
25. "New Sightseeing Tower," NYT, Nov. 13, 1927, p.24, and Nov. 20, 1927, sec.13, p.17.
26. "Film Record of Building," NYT, May 16, 1926, sec.8, p.5.
27. "Times Square to See 1,224 Tons Lifted," NYT, Jan. 30, 1926, p.7, and "Superb Building Feats of New Skyscrapers," NYT, Feb. 28, 1926, sec.9, p.5.
28. "Paramount Stone is Laid," NYT, May 20, 1926, p.10.

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 Paramount 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 Paramount Building was an important contribution to the development of Times Square in the 1920s and continues to be a prominent feature in the skyline of the world-famous theater and entertainment district; that, built in 1926-27, it is an innovative setback skyscraper which, when erected, was the tallest building on Broadway north of the Woolworth Building; that the building's distinctive massing creates a striking pyramidal silhouette which is further enhanced at the upper stories by overscaled consoles, four clock faces recalling the Paramount trademark, and a crowning glass globe; that, designed by the Chicago-based firm of Rapp & Rapp, who were among the best-known and most prolific designers of elaborate movie theaters in this country in the 1920s, it served as the Eastern headquarters for the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, (forerunner of Paramount Pictures), whose entrepreneurial founders played a major role in promoting the revolutionary motion picture medium; that the building once housed the Paramount Theater, which was the location of many important entertainment events throughout its history; and that the design incorporates imaginative theatrical motifs and classically-inspired ornamental details, such as cartouches, festoons, and scrolls, which were a hallmark of Rapp & Rapp's style.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provision of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Paramount Building, 1493-1501 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 29 as its Landmark Site.

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- _____. Mark Hellinger Theater Designation Report (LP-1339). Report supervised and edited by Anthony W. Robins. New York: City of New York, 1987.
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The Paramount Building, 1926-27
1493-1501 Broadway

Architects: Rapp & Rapp
Photo credit: LPC



The Paramount Building
West 44th Street elevation

Photo credit: David Breiner



The Paramount Building
Main entrance

Photo credit: David Breiner



The Paramount Building
Base, windows and spandrels

Photo credit: David Breiner



The Paramount Building
Historical Photograph, Theater entrance

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