

Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 16, 1990; Designation List 228
LP-1758

359 BROADWAY BUILDING, Borough of Manhattan, Built 1852; architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 174, Lot 33.

On December 12, 1989, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 359 Broadway Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 22). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Eight witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Three representatives of the owner spoke against designation. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has received six letters in favor of designation. Four letters from representatives of the owner and two letters from the owner have been received opposing designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

No. 359 Broadway, on the west side of Broadway between Leonard and Franklin streets, is a distinguished early Italianate commercial building constructed in 1852, a time when this section of Broadway was the city's most prestigious shopping area, containing a number of fashionable daguerreotype studios. An important and unusual example of the Italianate style, this stone-fronted commercial building, with its distinctive and varied window openings and abundant ornament, is a blend of Italianate elements from several sources. The 359 Broadway Building has special historical significance because it was occupied by noted photographer Mathew B. Brady from 1853-59. Brady, one of the most important photographers in American history, was renowned for both his portraits and his numerous photographs of the Civil War which are still the primary visual document of that conflict. As the city expanded northward from the southern tip of Manhattan in the 1840s and 1850s, this area became a prosperous neighborhood of shops, saloons, and photographers devoted to serving the fashionable clientele that made Broadway the city's most distinguished promenade. Remarkably intact, No. 359 Broadway serves as a significant reminder of the area's glittering past as a premier shopping district and as a home to the studio of one of America's most noted nineteenth-century photographers, Mathew Brady.

The Commercial Transformation of Lower Broadway¹

The unparalleled growth of New York City in the nineteenth century, which led to its emergence as the largest and richest city in the country, was primarily the result of commerce. Following the War of 1812 and the reopening of Atlantic trade routes, and the completion in 1825 of the Erie Canal which connected New York to inland cities, the city grew into the country's major port and trading center. Commercial pressures began to push

the city northward beyond the geographical limits of lower Manhattan, and a pattern of rapid development and redevelopment emerged. The city's commercial districts moved into residential areas, replacing older houses with retail establishments, while new residential districts for the wealthy developed still further north on the city's outskirts. Older commercial areas to the south became warehouse and wholesale districts.

Following the completion in 1846 of the precedent-setting A.T. Stewart drygoods store (280 Broadway), designed by Joseph Trench and John B. Snook,² the section of Broadway north of City Hall rapidly changed into the city's leading commercial district. In the following decades, Broadway between City Hall Park and Madison Square became the major commercial artery of the metropolis. Stewart's store, an impressive Italianate style "palazzo" executed in stone with cast-iron and glass storefronts, also established the architectural character for much of that development for the rest of the century.

As this area developed into the city's leading business and shopping district, a number of saloons opened on Broadway in the 1840s and 1850s. Because it was a fashionable shopping district catering to women, many of these establishments along this section of Broadway were "ladies' saloons" -- restaurants for women -- that served the throngs of shoppers in this area. The most notable of the saloons in the neighborhood was Taylor's Saloon, located just to the north of the 359 Broadway Building at No. 365. Begun as an ice-cream shop and confectionery, Taylor's was praised by city guidebooks as "the largest and most sumptuous (restaurant) in the city or the country."³ Taylor's Saloon was a feast for the eyes as well, with an abundance of mirrors, marble, and carved decoration to draw in the three thousand people that the restaurant served on an average weekday. The 359 Broadway Building was erected by owner James Thompson in 1852. Thompson, listed in New York City directories as both a saloon owner and a confectioner, operated a saloon at 359 Broadway until 1860. Thompson's Saloon at 359 Broadway, like Taylor's, served as an enticing establishment for shoppers enjoying another popular Broadway diversion, a visit to the photographer. One of the most famous was located upstairs.

Mathew Brady's studio at 359 Broadway was one of an estimated eighty-six portrait galleries in New York City in 1853; thirty-seven of these were located on Broadway. The avenue was the favored location of daguerrian artists because of its role as a fashionable promenade, and the prospect of a saloon and a photographer in the same building was especially inviting to passing shoppers. All of the galleries were located on upper floors of buildings and illuminated by skylights essential to indoor portraiture. Mathew Brady's studio, which occupied 359 Broadway from 1853 to 1859, was one of the most famous Broadway galleries. One of Brady's chief competitors, Martin M. Lawrence, opened a new gallery at 381 Broadway the same day that Brady opened his own studio. Another competitor, Jeremiah Gurney, had a studio located at 189 Broadway⁴ and was known as Broadway's oldest and most popular daguerreotypist, having founded his business in 1840. All of these studios were housed in great splendor. Brady's gallery, which occupied the upper three floors of 359 Broadway, boasted such rich furnishings as velvet tapestries and gilt chandeliers, and was typical of

many of the galleries which lined this section of Broadway.

In response to New York City's expanding economy and population growth, fashionable shopping areas ultimately moved further north and this section of Broadway became devoted to other commercial interests, particularly textile manufacturing. These uses continue to the present day. The changing use of the 359 Broadway Building was typical of the commercial transformation of this section of lower Broadway from the city's most prestigious shopping district to a center for manufacturing. It serves as a fitting reminder of the area's glittering past.

Mathew Brady and 359 Broadway⁵

Mathew B. Brady (c.1823-1896) was born in Warren County, New York. It appears that the unusual spelling of his first name was Brady's own invention, and that his middle initial "B." did not stand for a name but was an affectation. In Saratoga, New York, he met portrait painter William Page, who encouraged his interest in art and later introduced him to artist and inventor Samuel F.B. Morse in New York. Brady was instructed in the daguerreotype process by Morse at age sixteen and opened his first gallery at the corner of Broadway and Fulton Street in 1844 at age twenty-one. In that same year he won the first of many prizes for his work, a premium and honorable mention from the American Institute. The following year he won first prize in two categories. In the late 1840s Brady's stated ambition became to photograph all notable Americans of the period. His Gallery of Illustrious Americans, published in 1850 with considerable circulation, contained portraits of an abundance of famous political and cultural figures including James K. Polk, Edgar Allan Poe, John J. Audubon, and James Fenimore Cooper.

In 1847 Brady opened a gallery in Washington, D.C. In 1851 he traveled to the London World's Fair, where his daguerreotypes were awarded a first prize and three medals. Returning to America, Brady opened a new gallery at 359 Broadway on March 19, 1853, and by 1854 he had closed his gallery further downtown. Brady's gallery, occupying the upper three floors of the building, typified the luxurious standards maintained in many Broadway galleries at the time. Through an elegant street entrance flanked by display cases containing photographs, one ascended to a reception room richly furnished with satin wall hangings, gilt and enamelled chandeliers, velvet tapestry carpets, and rosewood furniture. Suspended on the walls were portraits of U.S. Presidents, European nobility, generals, and cultural figures of all nations and professions. Past the reception room was an office and a ladies' parlor decorated in gold and green and furnished with rosewood furniture. Two "operating rooms" -- one with a southern and one with a northern exposure -- led from the reception room. Plate-cleaning and electroplating were done on the fourth floor, while the fifth floor provided storage space and a skylit studio for special lighting effects.⁶

By January of 1860 Brady's gallery was located in temporary quarters at 643 Broadway, at the northwest corner of Bleecker Street and Broadway.⁷ An article in the March 14th New York Herald stated that Brady had leased new quarters at the corner of Tenth Street and Broadway, but would remain at the

Bleecker Street gallery for "a few months" so that the Tenth Street building could be renovated to fit his needs.⁸

Although Brady usually employed assistants to do the work of photographing, he was the cameraman for one special portrait taken at the time he had his Bleecker Street studio on February 27, 1860.⁹ On that day Abraham Lincoln arrived in New York for a campaign speech at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art; he also agreed to sit for a portrait by Brady. Lincoln later noted that, in addition to the speech he gave that day, the tintype portrait taken by Brady (which was widely distributed as a campaign medal) was a major factor in his election to the presidency in 1860.¹⁰

At the beginning of the Civil War Brady interested President Lincoln in a proposal to photograph battle and camp scenes. These photographs, more than 3,500 in all, contain some of Brady's best-known work and are essential documents of Civil War history. After the war he sought to recover the copies of the photographs that had passed from his hands and in 1870 he published Brady's National Photographic Collection of War Views and Portraits of Representative Men. In 1875 the federal government purchased from Brady a set of 2,000 of these photographs.

Brady's fortunes deteriorated rapidly with the end of the Civil War, and the Panic of 1873 completed his financial ruin. He continued his photographic career in Washington, but never regained the prestige of his earlier years. In 1895 he moved back to New York where he took ill and died on January 15, 1896.

Photography in the Mid-Nineteenth Century¹¹

The daguerreotype was the photographic process initially used for portraiture by Mathew Brady and other artists along Broadway in the 1840s and 1850s. It takes its name from the Frenchman Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre (1787-1851), a painter, scenic designer, and proprietor of the Diorama in Paris which was a theater without actors where enormous paintings were exhibited under changing light effects. Daguerre experimented in securing permanent images with a camera obscura before entering into a partnership with Joseph Nicephore Niepce (1763-1833), another important figure in the early development of photography. Daguerre perfected the method of sensitizing silver photographic plates with fumes of iodide. This involved placing the silvered side of a plate over a box containing particles of iodine. After heating, the iodine fumes produced light-sensitive silver iodide when they came in contact with silver. In 1835 Daguerre found a method of developing latent images on his photographic plates by subjecting them to mercury vapor after exposure, "fixing" the images with common salt.

In 1837 and 1838 his "daguerreotype" invention was purchased by the State of France, and within a year manuals explaining the process were published in eight languages. The daguerreotype served as the world's principal mode of photography for nearly two decades until it was eclipsed in the mid-1850s by the ambrotype, a less expensive variation of the

daguerreotype which was printed on glass.

The word "photography" was used by daguerreotypists to refer to the wet-plate or collodian process invented by Englishman Frederick Scott Archer (1813-57) in 1851. Collodian was a viscous solution of a pulplike substance called guncotton and potassium iodide which formed a skinlike film on a photographic plate. While still tacky, the plate was plunged into a silver nitrate solution enabling light sensitive silver iodide to be produced in a chemical reaction within the collodian. The plate was developed by pouring a solution of pyrogallic acid and silver iodide over it, and the image was fixed with sodium thiosulphate. Ambrotypes, using this process, were essentially glass negatives backed in black to appear positive. By 1861 the tintype (also known as the melainotype or ferrotype) had taken over. A variation on the ambrotype, a sheet of thin iron laquered black, rather than a glass plate, was the support of the sensitized collodian.

Because of the rapid advancement of photography in the mid-nineteenth century, the daguerreotypist became a vanishing breed. About 1854 Brady brought Alexander Gardner (1821-1882) from England, an expert in the wet-plate process, and thereafter discarded the daguerreotype. By 1861 the outmoded process, which had initially interested Brady in photography, had disappeared completely.

The Italianate Style and 359 Broadway¹²

The 359 Broadway Building was one of many Italianate style commercial buildings lining Broadway in the mid-nineteenth century. Its design illustrates several influences, including that of A.T. Stewart's marble commercial palace at 280 Broadway (later known as the Sun Building, 1845-46, Joseph Trench and John B. Snook, a designated New York City Landmark). An architectural style derived from the palaces of the Italian Renaissance and introduced to London by Charles Barry with the Traveller's Club (1830-32) and to Manchester with the Athenaeum (1837), the Italianate style was distinctly urban in character; its form was cubic, flat-roofed, and nearly flat-surfaced. Alexander Turney Stewart (1803-1876), New York's wealthiest merchant, saw this style while on his annual buying trips to England, and was one of the first to bring it back to this country.

Stewart's successful store fostered imitations almost immediately. Architectural historian Winston Weisman noted that it "created architectural repercussions up and down the Atlantic seaboard."¹³ In New York, Broadway and its side streets became lined with marble, brownstone, and cast-iron commercial palaces. The transformation was noticed in 1852, the year 359 Broadway was constructed:

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

Although the overall design of the 359 Broadway Building is related to

the models of the A. T. Stewart store and its English precursors, its ornament is abundant and unique. Unlike Stewart's marble palace, with its uniform square-headed window openings, 359 Broadway has a variety of openings including arched, segmentally-arched, square-arched, and unusual square-headed bays capped by triangular bell-cast arches with a suggestion of oriental inspiration. The arched window openings of the first story (now altered) and the second story suggest the rising influence of the northern Italian variety of the Italianate style, characterized by arched windows flanked by engaged columns in the manner of the Roman Colosseum, thus providing a minimum of unbroken wall surfaces. This variation in the style first appeared in the United States in 1850 when R.G. Hatfield designed the Sun Building in Baltimore. The Harper Brothers Building (1854, demolished), constructed facing Franklin Square (now occupied by footings of the Brooklyn Bridge), was an early building in this style in New York. The stacking of segmental-arched and flat-arched window openings on the third and fourth stories of 359 Broadway presages their use in cast-iron buildings in New York of the 1850s, '60s, and '70s. This variation in window openings is seen in contemporary publications devoted to cast-iron architecture, such as Daniel D. Badger's Illustrations of Iron Architecture published in 1865.¹⁵

The use of a variety of bay openings suggests a blend of European influences, producing a hybrid of architectural styles and motifs within the Italianate mode. Given the great wave of immigration from many countries that hit New York in the mid-nineteenth century, it is possible that the designer of the 359 Broadway Building was a recent European immigrant. The unusual carved arches of the fifth story demonstrate an oriental or even a Gothic influence, and suggest the use of pattern books illustrating architectural details, possibly German or French. The abundance of ornament, though innovative, is used in a rather liberal manner that suggests the involvement of a builder rather than the more deliberate hand of an architect. In any case, 359 Broadway is a precedent-setting example of the use of stacked picturesque window openings as executed in stone.

The design of the 359 Broadway Building is an unusual example of the Italianate style, illustrating the profound impact made by A.T. Stewart's marble palace and drawing on motifs from the northern Italian Renaissance, probably in combination with pattern books. It evokes these influences without being a strict imitation of any of them, and is a unique reminder of the commercial palaces that once lined Broadway when it was New York's most fashionable shopping district.

Description

This five-story Italianate style commercial building is located on the west side of Broadway approximately fifty-four feet south of Franklin Street between Leonard and Franklin Streets. It extends twenty-eight feet along Broadway. The facade displays a rich combination of Renaissance details and retains much of its original appearance.

Faced in stone, stories two through five are articulated by two bays each containing two window openings articulated by three paneled pilasters: the pilasters at the second story have a central circular motif and

abstracted Corinthian capitals. The arched openings are crowned with molded archivolts and acanthus leaf keystones. The third story continues the pattern of the second story with segmentally-arched openings. Rondels contain an abstract floral motif in the northern bay and a fleur-de-lis in the southern bay, and the pilasters are divided into two sections each by a square motif in the center. The third story is crowned by a projecting cornice with modillions. The fourth story has square-arched openings and pilasters divided into three sections. A projecting stringcourse at the impost level spans each bay. The fourth story is crowned by a raised frieze with semi-circular pendants. The fifth-story openings are topped by unusual triangular bell-cast arches. The pilasters are divided into two sections like those on the third story. The building is crowned by an elaborate metal cornice (with projecting elements terminating the pilasters) supported by modillions with pendants. Metal dados top the cornice at each end.

The center windows of stories two through five have four-over-four double-hung wood sash and the end windows have one-over-one double-hung wood sash; an historic fire escape spans the two center bays of each story. At the second story, the southern bay is fronted by a recent addition to the fire escape. Black glass panels in the bulkheads of the southern portion of the first story support the plate glass windows of the non historic storefront. To the north paired metal doors forming a service entrance are flanked by piers faced in aluminum. The first story is surmounted by a sign covering the width of the facade.

The southern elevation, visible above neighboring buildings on Broadway, is of brick, painted beige, punctuated by two visible window openings with two-over-two aluminum sash. A chimney rises above the roofline at the center of the elevation. A painted sign reading "359/Brady's/Gallery" existed on the southern elevation until 1988 when it was painted over.

Subsequent History

Early in the history of the 359 Broadway Building, ironwork which had been installed above the center of the cornice after the building's completion was removed. During the late-nineteenth century, the character of the neighborhood changed from that of the city's premier shopping district to one of mixed use, primarily textile manufacturing and wholesaling. At that time the building housed both a drygoods store and a shirt and cloak factory, and it continues to house a textile concern today. The fifth floor currently houses the Tibet Center, a cultural and religious organization.

Report prepared by Kevin McHugh, Research Department

Edited by Elisa Urbanelli, Research Department Editor

NOTES

1. Portions of this section are based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, No. 361 Broadway Building Designation Report (LP-1225), report prepared by Anthony Robins (New York, 1982); see also Beaumont Newhall, The Daguerreotype in America (1961), 55-60. A general account of this pattern of development may be found in Charles Lockwood, Manhattan Moves Uptown (Boston, 1976).
2. Harry E. Resseguie, "A.T. Stewart's Marble Palace -- The Cradle of the Department Store," in the New-York Historical Society Quarterly, 43 (1964), 133-35, including notes 3 and 4.
3. The 1866 Guide to New York City (1866; rpt. New York, 1975), 93.
4. 189 Broadway has been demolished; 381 Broadway is extant.
5. This summary of Brady's life is based on Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 1 (New York, 1927-36), 584-85; Newhall, 56-60; and George Gilbert, "Letter from the American Photographic Historical Society, Inc. to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, New York City," (letter in the research files of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Dec. 27, 1989), unpaginated [1].
6. See Newhall, 55-60.
7. An advertisement for Brady's gallery stated that his address was 643 Broadway, "at the corner of Broadway and Bleecker." See New York Times, Jan. 4, 1860, p.2.
8. "Fine Arts," New York Herald, March 14, 1860, p. 2.
9. Francis B. Carpenter Six Months in the White House (New York, 1866), 46.
10. William Welling, Photography in America: The Formative Years 1839-1900 (New York, 1978), 137, 145.
11. This description of the development of the daguerreotype is based on Welling, 1-2, 111, and Newhall, 65, 107-08.
12. This account of the Italianate style is based on LPC, Sun Building Designation Report (LP-1439), report prepared by James T. Dillon (New York, 1986), 2-6; and LPC, 319 Broadway Building Designation Report (LP-1650), report prepared by Kevin McHugh (New York, 1989), 3-4.
13. Winston Weisman, "Commercial Palaces of New York: 1845-75," Art Bulletin 36 (Dec., 1954), 288.

14. Gleason's Pictorial, 3 (Nov. 1, 1852), 371, cited in I.N. Phelps Stokes, The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909 (New York, 1915-1929), vol. 4, under heading "1852 Nov. 13."
15. For illustrations of designs using a variety of bay openings as executed in cast iron see Daniel D. Badger Illustrations of Cast Iron Architecture (New York, 1865), plates 35 and 38, published in W. Knight Sturgis, The Origins of Cast Iron Architecture in America (New York, 1970).

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 359 Broadway 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 359 Broadway Building is a distinguished early Italianate stone-fronted commercial building constructed in 1852, at a time when this section of Broadway was the city's most prestigious shopping area, containing a number of fashionable daguerreotype studios; that it is an important and unusual example of the Italianate style with distinctive and varied window openings and abundant ornament blending elements from several sources; that it was occupied by noted photographer Mathew B. Brady from 1853-59, renowned for both his portraits and for his numerous photographs of the Civil War; and that, remarkably intact, it serves as a fitting reminder of the area's glittering past as an exclusive shopping district.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21), 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 359 Broadway Building, 359 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 174, Lot 33, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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359 Broadway Building, 1852
359 Broadway

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359 Broadway Building
Facade Detail

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359 Broadway Building
First Story

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