

CITIES SERVICE BUILDING, 70 Pine Street (aka 66-76 Pine Street, 2-18 Cedar Street, 171-185 Pearl Street), Manhattan. Built 1930-32; Clinton & Russell, Holton & George, architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 41, Lot 1.

On May 10, 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Cities Service Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing was duly advertised according to provisions of law. Six people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the owners, Manhattan Community Board 1, the Historic Districts Council, and the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

Summary

The former Cities Service Building at 70 Pine Street is a 66-story skyscraper, rising from a trapezoidal site bounded by Pine Street, Cedar Street, and Pearl Street. An icon of the lower Manhattan skyline, the building's shaft terminates in a slender pinnacle crowned by an illuminated lantern and stainless steel spire. At the time of completion in 1932, this Art Deco style tower was the tallest structure in lower Manhattan, and at 952 feet, the third tallest structure in the world. Commissioned by a major American corporation, it was an expression of the owner's success, escalating real estate costs, and the current zoning code that required buildings to diminish in mass as they rise. The Cities Service Company was chartered by Henry L. Doherty in 1910, and quickly grew to become one of the largest corporations in the United States, controlling approximately 150 energy firms in 38 states, including numerous oil and power suppliers. In the late 1920s, Doherty made considerable investments in Manhattan real estate, acquiring 60 Wall Street, which he planned to expand and occupy as his headquarters. When two proposals failed to win the Department of Buildings' approval, the current site was assembled, costing \$2 million. Clinton & Russell, Holton & George served as architect, designing a set-



back tower, clad with white brick, light gray Indiana limestone, and speckled rose-and-black granite. Thomas J. George is thought to have been the lead designer, enriching the lower floors with stylized reliefs that rival any architectural ornamentation created during the Art Deco period in New York City. Of particular interest is the company's triangular logo, as well as sunflowers, sunbursts and stepped pyramids, which direct the eye upward and recall the shape of the spire. The northeast and southeast portals are the most distinctive entrances, with four-story-tall archways leading to multistory vestibules connecting the first floor and basement lobbies. At the center of both east portals is a limestone model of the Cities Service Building. In a city crowded with new skyscrapers, this unusual sculptural feature illustrated what had become almost impossible to see – the building in its entirety. Doherty's headquarters incorporated various innovative features, including escalators linking the lower floors, the city's first double-deck elevators, and private terraces enclosed by steel railings coated with aluminum lacquer. The opening of the building coincided with Doherty's return as the company's chief executive and he intended to occupy the crown as his private triplex. When plans were canceled, the uppermost floor was converted to a public observation gallery, with unsurpassed views of New York harbor. Though completed during the early years of the Great Depression, the Cities Service Building was a modest success. Financed through a public stock offering rather than a mortgage, it reportedly achieved profitability by 1936 and was 90% occupied by 1941. The Cities Service Company was renamed CITGO in 1965 and the building was sold to the American International Group in 1976. Following AIG's financial collapse in 2008 and a subsequent bailout by the U.S. government, this distinctive tower was acquired by Sahn Eagle LLC in 2009. The Cities Service Building is one of lower Manhattan's most prominent skyscrapers and one of the finest Art Deco style buildings in New York City.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Following World War I, high-rise office buildings transformed the lower Manhattan skyline. Built by real estate developers and major American corporations, these skyscrapers were bold expressions of corporate success, escalating real estate costs, and the current set-back zoning regulations. Conceived during the late 1920s, the Cities Service Building was completed at the start of the Great Depression in 1932. A lasting symbol of one early 20th-century company's rapid growth and accomplishments, at 952 feet this Art Deco style tower was once the third tallest building in the world.¹

Henry L(atham) Doherty and the Cities Service Company

The Cities Service Company was chartered in 1910 to “distribute light, heat, and power.”² Backed by various New York City investors, it was headed by Henry L. Doherty (1870-1939), an astute businessman and “self-trained engineer” who held 150 patents. Born in Columbus, Ohio, Doherty managed several Midwestern utility companies before moving east to organize Henry L. Doherty & Company, with substantial investments throughout the United States, Mexico, and Canada. In tandem with Cities Service, Doherty would own “directly or indirectly, a controlling interest in more than 150 subsidiaries,” most of which were involved in oil production or the delivery of gas and electricity. By 1932, Doherty was a multimillionaire and his companies enjoyed record profits, serving 9,000 communities in 38 states and Canada and 600,000 stockholders.³ Many lawsuits, however, were brought against his billion-dollar corporation during the Depression years and though Doherty reportedly relinquished control of the company in 1935, it was not until his death in 1939 that W. Alton Jones officially succeeded him as chief executive.⁴

Doherty held substantial real estate investments, with numerous properties in Florida and New York City. In December 1924, he purchased 60 Wall Street (1903-5, demolished in 1975), where his offices had been since 1906, for \$3 million.⁵ Designed by Clinton & Russell, this building had an unusual two-part layout, incorporating a 15-story structure on Wall Street linked to a 27-story structure on Pine Street.⁶ Doherty owned several additional properties in lower Manhattan, as well as “50,000 square feet of partly improved land” east of Battery Park, where, as early as 1919, he proposed to build “a great business centre, rivaling Wall Street.”⁷ It seems likely that Doherty intended to consolidate his workforce at this location but when the project failed to go forward he looked elsewhere, establishing the Pine Street Realty Company by early 1929.⁸

With the purchase of 60 Wall Street, Doherty had developed plans to substantially enlarge the structure. Clinton & Russell's first scheme, presented in March 1927, incorporated a simple slab-like addition of undetermined height. The second plan, in October of the same year, was more ambitious, featuring a 60-story neo-Gothic style tower above a completely redesigned base. When neither scheme won approval from the Department of Buildings, the Pine Street Realty Company (later known as 60 Wall Tower, Inc.) began to purchase parcels on the north side of Pine Street, where the Cities Service Building would ultimately stand. This location had significant advantages. Located close to the center of the financial district, it was also near the Third Avenue elevated railroad which ran along Pearl Street to South Ferry. With mostly low-rise neighbors to the east, the site had great visibility and any high-rise structure built there was destined to become an icon of the lower Manhattan skyline.

The 32,000 square-foot site was assembled by purchase and lease during 1929 and 1930, with a total of 247 feet on Pine Street, 247 feet on Cedar Street, and 116 feet on Pearl Street. All of the 23 lots contained three-to-five story structures, masonry buildings that had low property values and could be easily demolished. The estimated cost was \$2 million – far less than most comparable downtown sites.⁹ Edwin C. Hill, a newspaper writer who authored a congratulatory booklet on the Cities Service Building, claimed:

It formed a site of unusual depth and offered attractive and inspirational opportunities to architects. For this a substantial figure has been paid and yet it represented one of the most economical assemblages of real estate in the history of Manhattan Island.¹⁰

It was an optimistic period for Manhattan real estate and several significant skyscrapers were rising in the area, including 1 Wall Street (Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, 1928-31) and the Manhattan Company Building (H. Craig Severance, Yasuo Matsui, Shreve & Lamb, 1929-30, both are designated New York City Landmarks).

By the time the Pine Street Realty Company filed plans with the Department of Buildings (NB 118-30) in May 1930, however, the economic climate had changed measurably. Despite an increasingly pessimistic forecast following the Wall Street crash of October 1929, Doherty persevered, claiming his \$7 million tower would be the “first of [a] series of structures which will be erected on four acres of sites controlled by the company in various sections of the financial district.”¹¹ Of these proposed buildings, however, only Cities Service was built. To accomplish this, an unusual financing method was adopted. Rather than use a conventional mortgage, Henry L. Doherty & Co. issued stock, selling more than \$15.7 million in shares to individual investors. This interest-free strategy would allow the company to later describe the project as “financially unique among large New York office buildings.”¹²

Clinton & Russell, Holton & George

The architect of the Cities Service Building was Clinton & Russell, Holton & George. Founded by Charles W. Clinton (1838-1910) and William Hamilton Russell (1857-1907), this prolific architectural firm was active from 1894 to 1947. Specializing in the design of office buildings and apartment houses, it was responsible for such designated New York City Landmarks as Graham Court (1899-1901), the Broad Exchange Building (1900-02), the Beaver Building (1903-4), and the Apthorp Apartments (1906-8). Following the deaths of Russell and Clinton, the firm kept its name under the leadership of James Hollis Wells (1864-1926), Alfred J.S. Holton, and Thomas J(ohn) George. Wells died in 1926 and the firm became known as Clinton & Russell, Holton & George.¹³

Holton (c. 1879-1936) joined the firm around 1897. Born and educated in Ontario, Canada, he was a resident of Brooklyn and a veteran of the First World War, having served in the Office Reserve Corps. George grew up in Rome, New York, and trained as an architect at Cornell University (B.A., 1896), where his thesis explored Italian Renaissance architecture. Following graduation, he moved to New York City and joined Clinton & Russell. Like Holton, he remained with the firm for the rest of his career and served as the chief designer of many prestigious projects. An official biography reported that he was “in charge of almost all of the designs” and was, at the time of his death, described as the “retired senior partner of the architectural firm Clinton & Russell of New York and architect of the Cities Service Building.”¹⁴

In the 1920s, Clinton & Russell were based in lower Manhattan, near many of its clients, at 17 John Street. While most of the firm’s early commissions had been neo-Renaissance style,

following the First World War it gradually moved away from classicism, using restrained Moorish, neo-Gothic and Art Deco style details. In particular, two projects anticipate the design of the Cities Service Building. One Cedar Street (aka 104 Maiden Lane, 187-97 Pearl Street), completed on the adjoining block, has almost identical massing and restrained Art Deco details. The latter project, constructed for the New Amsterdam Causality Company at 60 John Street, at the southwest corner of William Street, displays a similarly restrained palette, executed with limestone and granite.¹⁵ Cities Service would be the firm's last and most important commission. Though Clinton & Russell would continue to operate throughout the Depression years, most of the firm's work involved refurbishing interiors.

Planning the Cities Service Building

Thomas J. George is likely to have designed, or supervised the design of the Cities Service Building. Planned as a corporate headquarters and to generate rental income, the massing conforms to the 1916 zoning ordinance, which regulated how most commercial buildings were built in New York City until 1961. Conceived to protect access to air and light in Manhattan's most crowded districts, this law required buildings to set back in tiers as they rise and to reduce their mass at certain heights. Bulk, consequently, was regulated and above the base diminished in stages, creating wedding-cake-like silhouettes in which the highest floors covered 25 per cent of the lot. At this point, there were no height restrictions and the total height was limited by only economics, technology, and ambition.

In the late 1920s, the skyscraper was carefully analyzed by the economist W.C. Clark. He presented his findings in a lecture at the Engineers' Club (a designated New York City Landmark) in October 1929 – as plans for the Cities Service Building were being drafted. At 63 stories, Clark concluded, a building reaches the “point of maximum economic returns.” This study also encouraged the use of “ingenious traffic arrangements . . . such as double decked cabs.”¹⁶ It seems likely that these recommendations directly shaped the original plan, which George filed with the Department of Buildings six months later as a 63-story office building with “twin deck elevators.” In subsequent months, however, three stories were added and the total height of the structure was increased from 763 to 950 feet (including the spire), surpassing the nearby 927-foot-tall Manhattan Company Building at 40 Wall Street, which was nearing completion. In doing so, Cities Service would become Manhattan's tallest building below 34th Street.¹⁷

George divided the elevations into three distinct sections. This arrangement conformed to the zoning ordinance and accentuates the vertical ascent of the tower. While the lowest floors are mostly obscured by neighboring buildings, the upper floors can be read as a continuous spire. The base fills the entire parcel, setting back gradually through the midsection, to the 30th floor. Because the site slopes up from east to west, the east elevation, adjoining Pearl Street, has a full basement and begins to set back at the 10th floor, while the west elevation adjoins the Down Town Association (1886-87, 1910-11, a designated New York City Landmark) and sets back at the 12th floor. Many of the shallow setbacks were accessible to tenants and could be used as terraces. At the 31st floor, the slab-like shaft begins, rising in a symmetrical fashion to the 55th floor. The 66th floor contained an observation gallery, crowned by a 27-foot-tall tiered glass lantern, and a 97-foot-tall stainless steel spire, which incorporated a neon beacon that was reportedly “visible for 200 miles at sea and inland.”¹⁸

The upper floors have small footprints and relatively little floor space – especially when the corridors, stairways, and elevators shafts are subtracted. To reduce the area devoted to such necessities, as Clark suggested, the architects employed eight double-deck elevators – the first

instance in the United States. According to the *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide*, this feature was “permitted by special provision in the new elevator code” and had “long been awaited by the industry as the solution to the problem of tall building economics.”¹⁹ With fewer elevators shafts, construction costs were reduced and approximately 40,000 additional square feet was made available for lease, with an estimated value of “\$84,000 a year in rentals.”²⁰ Manufactured by the Otis Elevator Company, in Yonkers, New York, each of the units contained a pair of stacked compartments, allowing passengers to enter or exit from two floors simultaneously.²¹ When in use, primarily during the morning and evening rush, the upper cabs stopped at the even-numbered floors, and the lower cabs, at odd. This technology attracted considerable media attention and remained in operation until 1972.²²

The Exteriors

In mid-to-late 1920s, a new style for corporate skyscrapers emerged and grew popular. Following completion of the neo-Gothic style Woolworth Building (a designated New York City Landmark and Interior) in 1914, many architects looked to the middle ages for aesthetic ideas, embellishing structures with turrets, finials and gargoyles. Historical motifs, however, soon began to lose favor and were replaced by a new decorative vocabulary inspired by contemporary European and American trends. Talbot Hamlin, a professor of architecture at Columbia University, observed in 1932:

That name – Modernism – covers inadequately a great number of diverse styles and movements, individual and local, with differing aims ... the search for originality, for new forms, a feeling that traditionalism is a bar to creative design.²³

Almost four decades passed before this short-lived aesthetic would be given a stylistic label by the English art historian Bevis Hillier. Distinguished by low decorative reliefs, vivid colors and unusual materials, since the 1960s this style has been commonly called “Art Deco,” suggesting a loose connection to the Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels of 1925, which helped introduce these aesthetic concepts to a wider audience.

Unlike the European avant-garde of the 1920s that promoted man-made materials and industrial production, architects who worked in the Art Deco style placed a high value on craftsmanship. Ornament remained important but was executed with a wide range of materials, from rare imported marbles to the latest industrial metals, such as aluminum. To please tenants and visitors, the most flamboyant details were typically reserved for the entrances and lobby. This is particularly true at the Cities Service Building; where the entrances are quite ornate and the rest of the elevations display considerable decorative restraint. Publicist Edwin C. Hill remarked:

Mr. Doherty himself found time to give a great deal of personal attention to the development of the plans . . . Generally speaking, he insisted on dignity with beauty, to the absolute avoidance of the garish, the flamboyant, and the over colorful.²⁴

To accomplish this goal, mostly light-colored materials were chosen, namely south Indiana limestone for the lowest elevations and four different shades of white-gray face brick, which darken slightly near the top – to increase the contrast of the tower against a bright sky. A striking exception is the polished red-and-black Brazilian granite veneer that extends around the base and continues the vertical expression of the limestone piers.²⁵ This conspicuous material helps

prepare visitors for the sumptuous first floor lobby, which functioned as the main entrance and a shared public space.

The first floor lobby has four entrances, two each on Pine Street and Cedar Street. This arrangement allows only the west entrances to be at grade, while tenants using the east entrances must ascend interior stairs. The lobby was intended to function as an extension of the street and contains storefronts in the east, west, and Pine Street halls. These retail spaces face inward and were not accessible from outside. A fifth entrance, on Pearl Street, served the basement lobby. Originally located in the shadow of the noisy elevated railroad, this entrance received a somewhat simpler decorative treatment.

On Pine and Cedar Streets, tenants enter through monumental stepped portals. The east portals are centered below the tower and provide entry to handsome multistory vestibules that incorporate stairs to the first floor and basement lobbies. Taller, deeper and somewhat grander than the west portals, which are two stories tall and have revolving doors, these impressive four-story entrances incorporate two sets of three doors, grouped to either side of a prominent limestone pillar. The side walls of each portal, as well as the ceilings, display limestone reliefs with repeating images of the Cities Service logo, a delta or triangle set within a trefoil, as well as other stylized forms. Similar reliefs, with rosettes at center, draw attention to the spandrels between the third and fourth story windows.

The center pillars in the east portals serve as pedestals for large “portraits” of the Cities Service Building. Carved in limestone, each almost free-standing sculpture stands about 14 feet tall. Rene P(aul) Chambellan (1893-1958), who designed the figurative reliefs on the aluminum elevator doors in the first floor lobby, was a celebrated architectural modeler and may have played a role in each sculpture’s design. A mostly accurate representation of the building, one can distinguish the various setbacks and windows, and even such details as the building portraits. Since medieval times, architects have occasionally used architectural imagery in their works, for instance, at the entrances to churches where patrons were sometimes depicted holding representations of the structure they sponsored. This idea reappears in the soaring elevator lobby of the 1913 Woolworth Building (a designated New York City Landmark) where merchant F.W. Woolworth is memorably depicted as a grotesque holding a miniature model of the tower.

At Cities Service, the limestone portraits celebrated the owner’s lofty status and direct the eye skyward.²⁶ In addition, these sculptures help people visualize the tower as a whole.²⁷ This was especially important in lower Manhattan, where streets can be unusually narrow, making it nearly impossible to view a building in its entirety. Other notable New York City structures that incorporate self-referential images include the Fuller Building (lobby floor mosaic), the Chrysler Building (ceiling mural), 500 Fifth Avenue (entrance relief), City Bank-Farmer’s Trust Company (interior grillwork), the Empire State Building (lobby relief), and 30 Rockefeller Plaza (mural).

Decorative Metalwork

The silvery-white aluminum metalwork was “executed under the supervision of the Parkhurst Organization.” Clif(f) Parkhurst (c. 1885-1965), who began his career following the First World War, was praised by the short-lived, monthly commercial journal *Metalcraft* as “needing no introduction to the architectural world. He has designed some of the exquisite work in metal in the country.”²⁸ During this period, evidence of his skill was found in the Shelton Hotel (Arthur Loomis Harmon, 1924), Western Union Building (Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, 1928-30, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior) and One Wall Street (Voorhees, Gmelin & Walker, 1929-30, a designated New York City Landmark). Relatively little is known about Parkhurst’s career. He was a frequent contributor to *Metalcraft*, including one of the only

known illustrated articles to address the design of the Cities Service Building. Though hardly an impartial observer, he wrote that it was:

. . . a structure of restrained modern design which reflects skilful [sic] craftsmanship and the most advanced engineering knowledge . . . The idea of permanency is at once appreciated and the effects sought by the architects have been faithfully reproduced.²⁹

Aluminum was one of the signature materials of the Art Deco and Moderne styles. Above the various entrance doors are rows of convex aluminum reliefs depicting pairs of butterflies with outstretched wings pecking at sunflowers, a possible allusion to oil production. Other details that were probably designed or executed by Parkhurst include the rope-like enframement that surrounds each portal, the large ventilation grille in front of the air intake chamber on Cedar Street, and the spandrels on the lower floors. Said to be of “unique construction,” these spandrels show “polished arrises on a deplated aluminum field.”³⁰ An arrise is a sharp edge or ridge, but these forms also suggest frozen fountains, or perhaps more self-referentially, an illuminated spire. Such imagery appeared frequently in 1920s architecture and graphics and can be interpreted as a metaphor for the skyscraper, or perhaps, the city as a whole.

The east portals frame four levels of windows. As originally built the lowest group, directly above the doors, contained numerous rows of horizontal glass louvers rather than fixed panes. Parkhurst explained their purpose in *Metalcraft*:

The street doors are especially designed at some of the street entrances as to their operation. The glass louvres (sic) . . . acts as baffles during the operation of this especially designed door. The sash directly behind the louvers opens with the door in dual operation and proves effective in reducing the customary hazard of wind pressure and permits a weather tight fitting of the doors.³¹

In a speech presented to the National Association of Bronze, Iron and Wire Manufacturers in October 1930, Parkhurst highlighted the role that specialists, like himself, played in the creation of skyscrapers: “Today, the skyline of many of our great cities bears evidence of our collaborative work and although our part is relatively minor, we really get a thrill out of our work.”³²

Construction

Crews began to clear the west half of the site in early 1930. The excavations, which reached a depth of 60 feet, removed more than 100,000 tons of rock and earth.³³ According to early estimates, this portion of the building was scheduled to be completed in May 1931, and the easterly portion – where the tower would rise – by May 1932. The contractor was James Stewart & Company. Founded in 1845, this firm grew to become one of the “so-called ‘big five’ in the field of American building construction,” with offices throughout the United States and abroad. In 1930, Stewart was the nation’s third most active builder, behind George A. Fuller and Marc Eidlitz & Son, with more than \$22 million in new contracts.³⁴ Under senior member A. M. Stewart, it received many important jobs in New York City, erecting such designated Landmarks as Mecca Temple (now City Center, H. P. Knowles with Clinton & Russell, 1922-24), the New York Central Building (1927-29) and the United States Courthouse (1933-36) on Foley Square. For Cities Service, engineer J(ohn) M. Parrish acted as general superintendent of construction.³⁵

Work commenced in May 1930. By April 1931, the steel framing had reached the 27th floor, and by July 1931, the 59th floor.³⁶ On average, three floors were added each week.³⁷ About

600 men were involved in the project, requiring 24,000 tons of steel and 119,000 man hours in which “no fatal injury or lost-time accident was recorded.”³⁸ The tapered stainless steel spire, rising from the top of the observation gallery, was installed during October 1931.³⁹ To connect the building to 60 Wall Street, a tunnel was constructed, as well as an enclosed pedestrian bridge at the 16th floor.⁴⁰ Completed by February 1932, this mid-air feature served two purposes: it provided direct access between the company’s two buildings and allowed the new tower to adopt a more prestigious Wall Street address.⁴¹

In early 1932, work was described as “rapidly nearing completion” and during subsequent months advertisements for office space were placed in local newspapers. Promoted as “Sixty Wall Tower,” the building was proudly described as “The Aristocrat of Skyscrapers . . . The distinctive beauty of its exterior and interior have been united in a harmonious alliance of its architects, engineers and builders.”⁴² A temporary certificate of occupancy was awarded by the Department of Buildings in March 1932 and a permanent one in August 1932.

Sixty Wall Tower

On May 13, 1932, a formal ceremony was held to celebrate the opening of 60 Wall Tower, corporate headquarters of the Cities Service Company. Like the dedication of the Empire State Building (Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, 1930-31, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior), a year earlier, it provided a welcome moment of optimism during dark economic times. In the past six years, Doherty had been absent from the public eye due to health problems and he used this well-publicized event to mark his 62nd birthday and return as chief executive. Cities Service publicist Hill boasted:

No man, not even the first of the Astors, ever had more confidence in the enduring and increasing values of the ground upon which New York City is built than Henry L. Doherty. It is that very confidence which is reflected in Sixty Wall Tower. Into land and building were invested millions at a time when many capitalists and financiers could see the future only through glasses smoked by their own fears and apprehensions. The third tallest building in the world is, therefore, the monolith of courage as well as capacity.⁴³

Approximately 200 business leaders attended the luncheon and ceremony, which included the unveiling of a bronze bust of Doherty, as well as the floodlighting of the spire.⁴⁴ In addition, a small mirror on the balcony of the 64th floor was used to transmit his voice via “moon beam power” to radio listeners throughout the world.⁴⁵

At 950 feet, the Cities Service Building was higher than the 927-foot Manhattan Company Building at 40 Wall Street, and only the 1,454-foot Empire State Building and the 1,046-foot Chrysler Building stood taller. The top three floors were planned as Doherty’s private apartment and office. Earlier, he had been credited with “starting the pent-house idea” at 26 State Street and was reportedly “listed in city records” as the building’s janitor to overcome restrictions on private use.⁴⁶ Despite such plans, Doherty never occupied the triplex and the 66th floor opened as a public observation gallery in July 1932. The 23-by-33 foot solarium featured:

special glass to admit the beneficial rays of the sun and is reached by an elevator of unusual design which disappears beneath the platform floor after discharging passengers, thus permitting unobstructed views of the metropolitan area in all directions.⁴⁷

Ringed by shallow outdoor terraces, there were open steel railings so that winds would clear the pavement and “nothing obstructs the gaze.”⁴⁸ Though some midtown observatories were loftier, such as the 102nd floor of the Empire State Building and the 71st floor of the Chrysler Building, the gallery at Cities Service offered unparalleled panoramic views of New York harbor and remained accessible until at least 1939.⁴⁹

From the start, 60 Wall Tower was a modest success. Three thousand employees of the Cities Service Company were reportedly based here, on at least the first seven floors, and in some of the uppermost floors.⁵⁰ The larger lower floors, where the clerical staff was mainly located, were linked by six pairs of reversible “moving staircases,” among the earliest installed in an office building. Like the double-deck elevators, this innovative feature was intended to improve circulation and reduce the number of elevator shafts. Manufactured by the Otis Elevator Company, it was reported that the escalators could move 6,000 passengers per hour and that the first six stories could be emptied in ten minutes.⁵¹

Most of the upper floors were rented to law firms that benefited from the convenience of an extensive tenants-only law library on the 29th floor.⁵² In 1933, the building was described as “about two-thirds rented, in spite of having to begin business during the Depression.”⁵³ Though almost a decade would pass before a 90% occupancy rate was reached, because there was no mortgage Cities Service quickly earned a profit, reporting \$500,000 income in 1936.⁵⁴ An early tenant of some renown was McGovern’s, occupying the seventh floor. Artie McGovern was a former boxer and trainer, whose clients included such athletes as Babe Ruth and well-known businessmen. Previously located on East 42nd Street, the 25,000-square-foot athletic facility incorporated a gymnasium facing Pearl Street, as well as six handball and squash courts, and areas for ping pong and golf. Reportedly, 1,000 men visited McGovern’s each day. Advertisements described it as the “World’s Largest Private Gymnasium.”⁵⁵

Recent History

Following the Second World War, the Cities Service Company reduced the number of staff in New York City and began to lease many of the lower floors to outside tenants, including the investment firm Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Beane, which signed a 25-year lease on ten floors in 1957.⁵⁶ Cities Services began to market gasoline under the name CITGO in 1965 and in 1973 it announced plans to move the executive offices to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where six of the company’s operating divisions were based.⁵⁷ About 250 employees were involved in the move. Three years later, in May 1976, the building was acquired by an insurance and financial services company, the American International Group (AIG).⁵⁸ At this time, the pedestrian bridge at the 16th floor was removed. Three years later, a replacement, located slightly east of the original, was approved by the Board of Estimate. Connecting the 6-7th floors to the 7-8th floors of 72 Wall Street (aka 73-77 Pine Street),⁵⁹ this sloping aluminum-clad transverse was completed in 1979.⁶⁰ In subsequent decades, the Cities Service Building was sometimes referred to as the American International Building. During the 1990s, the exterior and lobby were refurbished. Following the financial collapse of AIG in 2008 and a subsequent bailout by the U.S. government, the building was sold in August 2009 to Sahn Eagle LLC.

Description

The Cities Service Building rises on a sloping, trapezoidal parcel bounded by Pine Street, Cedar Street, and Pearl Street. The building consists of an asymmetrical base, a slender tower that rises in a symmetrical manner from the 31st floor, and a faceted spire. The west facade is visible above the seventh floor. Viewed from the east and west, setbacks are symmetrical. The

facade is mostly faced with light-colored brick and grayish limestone except for the lower part of the ground floor which is clad with polished red and black granite panels. The brick lightens in color as the elevations rise. Between the third and fourth floors, the spandrels incorporate large rosettes, made of carved limestone or terra cotta. Above the fourth story windows, the spandrels are brick, with two raised vertical bands laid over four horizontal bands. The multiple irregular setbacks vary in height and depth and are enclosed with decorative aluminum railings. The double hung windows are not historic but resemble the originals. Some terraces can be accessed through doors.

Historic: *Pine Street (south) elevation:* eleven bays, two entrances portals, wider east portal projects slightly, slopes down to east. First and second floor: red and black granite facing, aluminum reliefs above doors in both portals, lighting fixtures in east portal, limestone model of building between doors in east portal, aluminum spandrel reliefs between floors, single pane basement windows.

Pearl Street (east) elevation: five triple-height bays, ground floor red and black granite base with single pane basement windows, aluminum reliefs between each of the 1st and 2nd story windows, transom windows; entrance to ground floor in center bay, crowned by row of identical aluminum reliefs, aluminum revolving door flanked by operable doors and fixed panes.

Cedar Street (north) elevation: twelve bays, red and black granite base with single pane basement windows, aluminum reliefs above doors, two entrance portals, larger east portal with six doors, lighting fixtures, west portal with four doors, flanked by two sets of doors in adjoining bays, loading dock with multi-panel door to right of east portal, aluminum spandrel reliefs between floors

Alterations: The one-over-one aluminum sashes are non-historic and are likely to date to the 1990s. Through wall air conditioners have been installed in various places on all four elevations.

Pine Street elevation: access ramp with aluminum railing, brown metal plaque to right of west entrance portal, windows replaced by horizontal metal louvers in tower and on lower floors, transoms in east portal, single pane windows and aluminum panel at base near Pearl Street, security camera in bay closest to Pearl Street, two-level aluminum footbridge with single pane glazing to east of east portal and extending over Pine Street.

Pearl Street (south) elevation: basement, silver marquee above recessed entrance to right of center bay, silver frame notice board, silver lettering for “The Captain’s Ketch.”

Cedar Street (north) elevation: 1st floor, center bays, infill masonry and back painted glass; various floors, horizontal metal louvers; 31st floor, machinery on west roof

West elevation: machinery on “shoulder” of 31st floor, north side of 55th floor terrace, 63rd floor terrace

For detailed documentation of the elevations in early 2011 and copies of the original drawings, see materials supplied by building owner in LPC Research files. Also, consult images in *Daniel M. Abramson, Skyscraper Rivals: The AIG Building and the Architecture of Wall Street* (2001).

Researched and written by
Matthew A. Postal
Research Department

NOTES

-
- ¹ Daniel M. Abramson, *Skyscraper Rivals: The AIG Building and the Architecture of Wall Street* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001).
- ² "\$50,000,000 Co. Charter," *New York Times*, September 3, 1910, 1.
- ³ "Cities Service Sets Records During Year," *Hartford Courant*, December 29, 1929, E26; Edwin C. Hill, *Sixty Wall Tower* (New York, 1932), 3.
- ⁴ "HL Doherty, Cities Service Head, Dies at 69," *Washington Post*, December 27, 1939; "Doherty Quits Control Over Cities Service," *Washington Post*, October 16, 1935, 14.
- ⁵ "HL Doherty & Co, Buy 60 Wall Street," *New York Times*, December 20, 1924, 8.
- ⁶ "60 Wall Street," *Insurance Engineering*, 10 (1905), 143, viewed at Googlebooks.com.
- ⁷ Ibid. Also see "Battery Harbor View Attracting Realty Operators," *Wall Street Journal*, December 1, 1919, 10.
- ⁸ "Other Manhattan Sales," *New York Times*, January 26, 1929, 35.
- ⁹ "12 Buildings Are Sold to HL Doherty & Co.," *New York Times*, January 29, 1929; "Seek to Enlarge Skyscraper Site," *New York Times*, November 30, 1929, 39; "Bishop Heirs Lease Two Large Sites," *New York Times*, July 12, 1930, 28; Abramson, 25.
- ¹⁰ Hill, 6.
- ¹¹ "Doherty Files Plans for Tower of 63 Stories," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 9, 1930, LPC files.
- ¹² Abramson, 29; "No Mortgage on Sixty Wall Tower," *Wall Street Journal*, August 10, 1932, 2.
- ¹³ "Copartnership Notice," *New York Tribune*, December 22, 1909, 11.
- ¹⁴ Cited by Abramson, 34, fn 6; "TJ George Dead; Retired Architect," *New York Times*, February 9, 1947, 61.
- ¹⁵ "New John Street Building," *New York Times*, July 20, 1930, RE7.
- ¹⁶ "75 Story Buildings Found Economical," *New York Times*, September 22, 1929, N1.
- ¹⁷ In 2011, a residential tower at 8 Spruce, reached a height of 870 feet. At the World Trade Center site, two buildings are under construction that are expected to meet or surpass the height of the Cities Service Building: 4 World Trade Center (947 feet) and 1 World Trade Center (1776 feet).
- ¹⁸ Hill, 13.
- ¹⁹ *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide*, October 31, 1931, 8, 38; "An Art Deco Tower With Double-Deck Elevators," *New York Times*, March 8, 1998, R5.
- ²⁰ "Skyscraper to Have 2-Story Elevators," *Washington Post*, October 18, 1931, R3.
- ²¹ "Otis Elevators, Products of Yonkers Plant," *The Herald Statesman*, Yonkers, June 27, 1938, 8.
- ²² "An Art Deco Tower With Double-Deck Elevators," *New York Times*, March 8, 1998, R5.
- ²³ Talbot Hamlin, "New Victorianism," *American Architect* (February 1932).
- ²⁴ Hill, 9.
- ²⁵ According to the current owner, ABC Stone identifies this material as Kinawa Black granite, quarried in Brazil.
- ²⁶ In *New York 1930*, Robert Stern called this the building's most "charming conceit, doorways divided by a massive buttress carved away to reveal a stone model of the tower, which surveyed the crowds of workers as a carved Madonna would bless the pilgrims of a Gothic cathedral." See Robert AM Stern et al, *New York 1930: Architecture Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Rizzoli Books, 1994), 602.
- ²⁷ See photo and caption in *Architectural Forum* (September 1932), 24.
- ²⁸ *Metalcraft* (April 1929), 179.

²⁹ Clif Parkhurst, "Skilful Craftsmanship and Advanced Engineering Knowledge Reflected in Manhattan's Newest Skyscraper," *Metacraft* (Vol. 9, July 1932), 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

³² Clif Parkhurst, "Collaborating With the Architect," *Metacraft* (November 30, 1930), 224.

³³ "Sixty Wall Tower Opens on May 13," *New York Times*, May 8, 1932, RE1.

³⁴ "George A. Fuller Led 1930 Builders," *Wall Street Journal*, March 16, 1931, 15.

³⁵ "A. M. Stewart Dies, Noted Builder," *New York Times*, December 22, 1939; "J.M. Parrish Dies, A Noted Engineer," *New York Times*, December 18, 1932, 29.

³⁶ "Doherty Realty Holdings Large," *Wall Street Journal*, March 16, 1931, 15.

³⁷ "Doherty Bldg. Ready By May," *Wall Street Journal*, February 25, 1932.

³⁸ "Provide Terraces In Office Building," *New York Times*, July 12, 1931, RE8; "Sixty Wall Tower Opens on May 13."

³⁹ "Eight-Ton Mast Set in Place," *New York Times*, October 21, 1931, 42.

⁴⁰ The Cities Service bridge was mentioned briefly in various articles when plans were filed in May 1932, "Doherty-Cities Service Tower to Feature Unique Facilities," *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide* (May 30, 1932), 8. It does not, however, appear in the drawings filed with the DOB in May and October 1930. It may have been inspired by a now-demolished bridge that originally linked the City Bank-Farmer's Trust Company Building (1930-31), via Exchange Place, to the National City Bank at 55 Wall Street. There is also a roof-top bridge above Thames Street connecting the Trinity and United States Realty Buildings (1904-7). The tunnel was mentioned in "Sixty Wall Tower Ready," *New York Times*, April 30, 1932, 28. In February 1932, the Pine Street Realty Company officially changed the building's name to Sixty Wall Tower. See *New York Times*, February 18, 1932, 38.

⁴¹ The bridge was razed in May 1975, when Cities Service demolished 60 Wall Street "to make the property more attractive to potential developers." The site is presently occupied by 60 Wall Street, formerly headquarters of JP Morgan Bank and Deutsche Bank. See "A Skywalk Demolished in Wall St. Razing Plan," *New York Times*, May 13, 1975, 71.

⁴² At this time, Pine Street Realty changed its name to "Sixty Wall Tower, Inc., A Cities Service Unit." In subsequent decades, it would be referred to as both Sixty Wall Tower and the Cities Service Building. See advertisement, *New York Times*, February 17, 1932, 38; "Upper Floors Rented in 60 Wall Tower," *New York Times*, February 17, 1932, 43; "Corporate Changes," *New York Times*, February 18, 1932, 38.

⁴³ Hill, 5.

⁴⁴ A small bronze bust of Doherty was sold from the website of Edgar L. Owen, an antiques dealer, in 2010. It was attributed to the sculptor Chester Black.

⁴⁵ "Dancing" Moonbeam Carries Human Voice," *New York Times*, May 14, 1932, 17; "Business: Return of Doherty," *Time* (May 23, 1932), viewed at Time.com.

⁴⁶ "Death Claims H.L. Doherty, Utility Head," *Rochester Democrat*, December 27, 1939, 4.

⁴⁷ "Tower Observatory Open," *New York Times*, July 10, 1932, RE1.

⁴⁸ Hill, 13.

⁴⁹ The cost for viewing was forty cents, whereas the Empire State Building was \$1.10. *New York City Guide* (New York: Random House and Federal Writers' Publications, Inc., 1939), 89.

⁵⁰ Cited by Abramson, 158.

⁵¹ "Escalators to Serve New Office Buildings," *New York Times*, May 17, 1931, 155; "Work Being Pushed on '60 Wall Tower," *New York Times*, February 21, 1932, XI/XII, 3; "Sixty Wall Tower Opened," *Real Estate Record and*

Guide, (May 14, 1932) 8; “Vertical Transportation in the New Sixty Wall Tower, New York,” *Buildings and Building Management*, (August 1932) 32; Hill, 16.

⁵² “Upper Floors Rented in 60 Wall Tower,” *New York Times*, February 17, 1932; Abramson, 156.

⁵³ Cities Service Company, *Annual Report* (1933), 4.

⁵⁴ Abramson, fn 30, 189-90.

⁵⁵ Abramson, 156.

⁵⁶ “Ten Floors Leased,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1957, 52.

⁵⁷ “Advertising: New Name and Emblem at Cities Service,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1965, 64.

⁵⁸ The American International Group was founded in China in 1919. According to the *New York Times*, AIG had been based in New York City since 1939, occupying various buildings in lower Manhattan. For most of the company’s history, it operated as a management company for foreign and domestic insurers. At the time that it purchased the Cities Service Building, it had 2,400 employees in lower Manhattan. See “AIG Is Moving Offices in Wall St. Area.” *New York Times*, March 22, 1978, D14.

⁵⁹ An annex to the former Seamen’s Savings Bank headquarters at 72 Wall Street (Benjamin Wistar Morris, 1926) was built by architect Voorhees, Walker, Smith & Smith in 1955-56. The building was acquired by AIG in 1978.

⁶⁰ At the time, AIG received \$7 million in tax credits for purchasing and renovating the Cities Service Building and 72 Wall Street, as well as structures on Maiden Lane. See “Albany Credits for Businesses,” *New York Times*, February 2, 1979, D7. The records for the current bridge are located at the Division of Franchises, Concessions & Consents, NYC Department of Transportation.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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 Cities Service 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 the Cities Service Building is a 66-story skyscraper that rises from a trapezoidal site bounded by Pine Street, Cedar Street, and Pearl Street; that it is an icon of the lower Manhattan skyline that terminated in a slender pinnacle crowned by an illuminated lantern and stainless steel spire; that at the time of completion it was the tallest structure in lower Manhattan, and at 952 feet, the third tallest structure in the world; that it was commissioned by a major American corporation and was an expression of the owner's success, escalating real estate costs, and the current zoning code that required buildings to diminish in mass as they rise; that the Cities Service Company was chartered by Henry L. Doherty in 1910 and quickly grew to become one of the largest corporations in the United States, controlling approximately 200 energy firms in thirty states, including numerous oil and power suppliers; that in the late 1920s Doherty made considerable investments in Manhattan real estate, acquiring 60 Wall Street, which he originally planned to expand and occupy as his headquarters; that when two proposals failed to win the building department's approval, the current site was assembled, costing \$2 million; that Clinton & Russell, Holton & George served as architect, designing a set-back tower clad with white brick, light gray Indiana limestone, and speckled rose and black granite; that Thomas J. George is thought to have been the lead designer, enriching the lower floors with stylized reliefs that rival any architectural ornamentation created during the Art Deco period in New York City, including the company's triangular logo, sunflowers, sunbursts and stepped pyramids that direct the eye upward and recall the shape of the spire; that the northeast and southeast portals are the most distinctive entrances, with deep triple-height archways that lead to vestibules connecting the first floor and basement lobbies; that the east portals display a limestone model of the Cities Service Building; that this unusual sculptural feature illustrates what had become almost impossible to see – the building in its entirety; that this corporate headquarters had many innovative features, including escalators linking the lower floors, the city's first double-deck elevators, and private terraces enclosed by steel railings coated with aluminum lacquer; that the opening of the building in 1932 coincided with Doherty's return as chief executive and his intention to occupy the crown as his private duplex; that when these plans were canceled, the uppermost floor became a public observation gallery with unsurpassed views of New York harbor; that in spite of the Depression, the building was a modest success; that it was financed through a public stock offering rather than a mortgage; that it reportedly achieved profitability by 1936 and was 90% occupied by 1941; that Cities Service was renamed CITGO in 1965 and the building was sold in 1976 to the American International Group, commonly called AIG; and that the Cities Service Building remains one of the most impressive Art Deco skyscrapers in New York City and one of the most prominent buildings on the lower Manhattan skyline.

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 Cities Service Building, Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 41, Lot 1, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Michael Devonshire, Michael Goldblum
Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan, Commissioners



Cities Service Building
70 Pine Street (aka 66-76 Pine Street, 2-18 Cedar Street, 171-185 Pearl Street)
Borough of Manhattan Block 41, Lot 1
West façade from Nassau Street
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



Cities Service Building
Spire, west elevation
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



Cities Service Building
Pine Street, east entrance
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



Cities Service Building
Pine Street, looking east, looking west
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



Cities Service Building
Pearl Street entrance
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



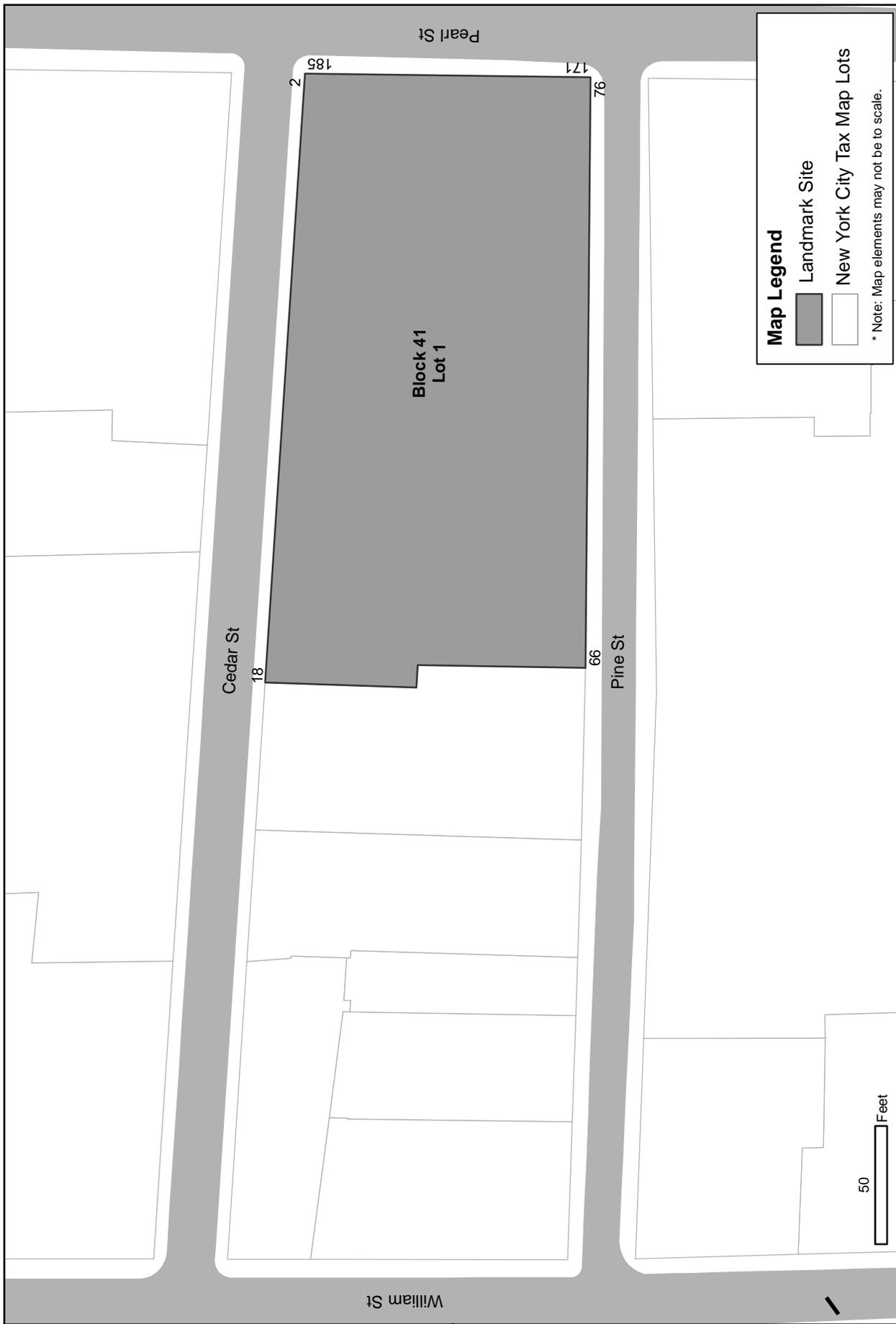
Cities Service Building
Cedar Street, view west, view east
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



Cities Service Building
Pine Street, west entrance portal
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



Cities Service Building
Cedar Street, east entrance portal
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



CITIES SERVICE BUILDING (LP-2441), 70 Pine Street (aka 66-76 Pine Street; 2-18 Cedar Street; 171-185 Pearl Street)
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 41, Lot 1

Designated: June 21, 2011