

Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel) Atrium



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LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan

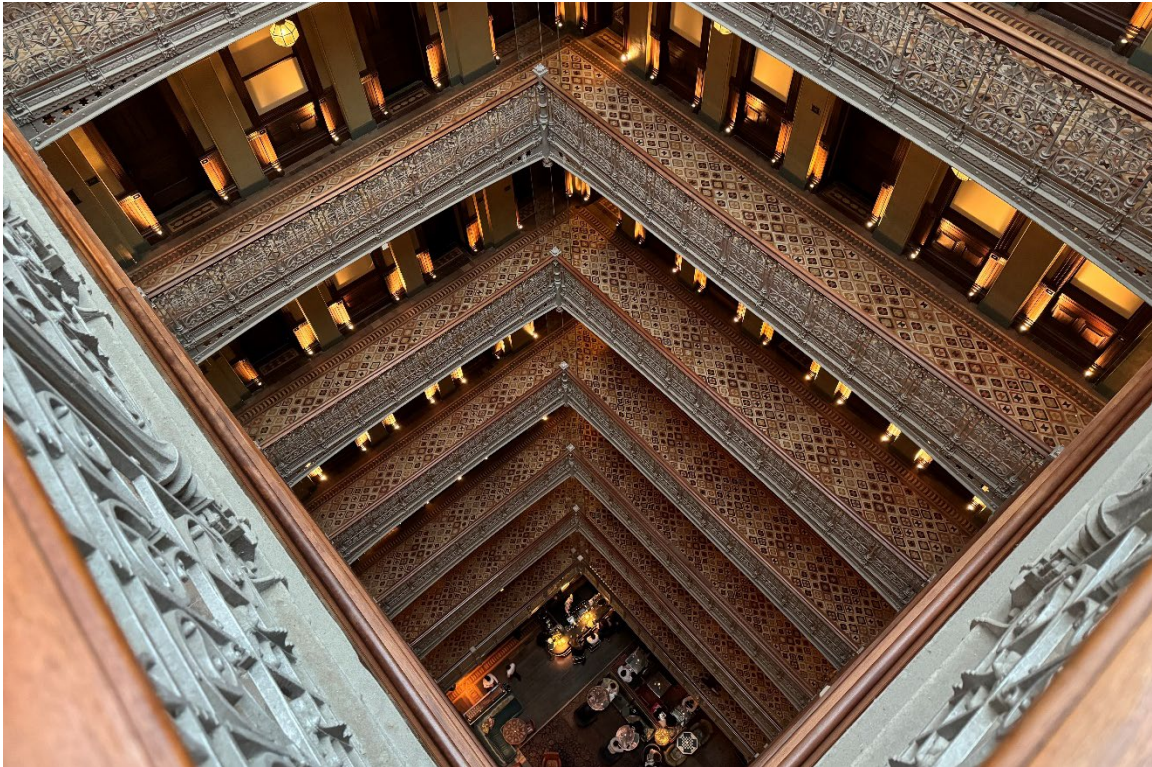
5 Beekman Street (aka 3-9
Beekman Street, 119-133
Nassau Street, 10 Theatre
Alley)

LANDMARK TYPE

Interior

SIGNIFICANCE

A rare and striking example of a full-height, skylit atrium in a late-19th century tall office building, featuring eight levels of historic galleries with ornate ironwork and arched doors and windows, which has been sensitively restored.



Atrium viewed from above

Kate Lemos McHale, 2024

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Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel) Atrium

5 Beekman Street (aka 3-9 Beekman Street,
119-133 Nassau Street, 10 Theatre Alley)
Borough of Manhattan

Designation List 540 LP-2681

Built: 1881-83; restored 2013-16

Architect: Silliman & Farnsworth; restoration architects Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 90, Lot 7503 (formerly lot 14). The landmark site consists of the volume of the atrium as defined by a line established by the exterior walls of the second story gallery, descending to the floor of the first story and ascending to the ninth story, and terminating in a glazed, cast-iron skylight; and the fixtures and interior components of this space, which may include but are not limited to the floor, wall, and ceiling surfaces; glazing, doors and trim; cast-iron staircase from first to ninth story; cast-iron galleries with balustrades, decorative supporting brackets, encaustic tile flooring, cast-iron ceiling plates, and double-leaf floor hatches; and flat- and round-arched door and window openings, as illustrated in the attached map.

Building Identification Number (BIN): 1079072

Calendared: February 27, 2024

Public Hearing: May 14, 2024

On May 14, 2024, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel) Atrium as a New York City Interior Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item no. 1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Five people spoke in favor of designation including two representatives of the owner, and representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, and Victorian Society of New York. No one spoke in opposition.

Summary

Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel)
Atrium

The Temple Court Building (a designated New York City Landmark) is the earliest remaining tall “fireproof” office building in New York City, and a rare surviving office building of its era constructed around a full-height interior skylighted atrium. It was designed in 1881 by the firm of Silliman & Farnsworth for Eugene Kelly and was among the first significant office buildings erected in downtown Manhattan after 1879 as the city recovered from the financial panic of 1873. When it opened in 1883, the building included more than 200 offices that were arranged around a polychrome atrium that rose for nine stories to a large pyramidal skylight enhanced with decorative metalwork. The atrium features eight tiers of galleries supported by ornamental iron brackets in the form of dragons or beams with cutwork decoration; cast-iron balustrades with decorative panels; encaustic tile floors; and ceilings created by ornamental cast-iron plates on the undersides of the galleries above. The atrium was enclosed for decades in the 20th century and was restored as the stunning centerpiece of the conversion of the Temple Court Building into The Beekman Hotel, which opened in 2016. GFI Development, LLC worked with the architectural firm of Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel, and Higgins Quasebarth & Partners to restore and reveal the historic atrium.

In the 19th century, the interior atrium became a popular feature in a variety of building types including hotels, libraries, department stores, and office buildings, since the volume allowed for both natural lighting and an enclosed, usually grand

and often highly decorative space. Its use in the United States was traced by the author Carl Condit to the Arcade Building (1827-28, James C. Bucklin & Russell Warren) in Providence, Rhode Island and by mid-century its popularity spread to New York, first appearing in the now demolished A. T. Stewart Department Store (1859-62, John Kellam) at Broadway and East 10th Street. The Temple Court Building’s striking nine-story atrium is a rare and architecturally significant early example of this feature in a commercial building.

The architects Benjamin Silliman, Jr. and James Mace Farnsworth worked in the office of Vaux, Withers & Co. and formed their own practice in 1877. Silliman & Farnsworth designed several prominent office and institutional buildings influenced by the *Rundbogenstil*, neo-Grec, and Queen Anne styles. In addition to the Temple Court Building, they were responsible for the 1879-80 Morse Building at 140 Nassau Street, a New York City Landmark, and 17 and 19 East 17th Street in the Ladies’ Mile Historic District. In 1883, Farnsworth left the firm to practice independently and among his commissions was the design of the Temple Court Building’s annex (1889-90) on Nassau Street.

The beautifully restored atrium includes historic galleries supported by decorative iron brackets, a skylight, ornate ironwork, and arched doors and windows at the guest room walls above the first story. The second-story gallery has been sensitively reconstructed retaining historic features and adding a new balustrade featuring glass panels etched with the foliate pattern of the historic cast-iron panels seen in the upper galleries. To meet life safety requirements, the atrium is protected by an innovative fire suppression system consisting of sprinklers and smoke curtains. It is significant as a stunning skylit nine-story volume that is a rare surviving example of a full-height commercial atrium in New York City.

Building Description

Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel)
Atrium

General Description

The nine-story Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel) Atrium is lit by a large glazed, cast-iron skylight and surrounded by eight levels of galleries with ornamental balustrades and lined with a series of arched and flat-headed openings that contribute to the visual rhythm of the space. The commercial character of the spaces off the galleries is evidenced by window as well as door openings. The atrium space is almost square in plan and incorporates a vertical circulation core on the south side.

The galleries are supported in whole or in part by cast-iron beams with cut-work decoration and by decorative cast-iron brackets in the form of dragons. Gallery floors are covered in polychrome encaustic tile laid in a repeating pattern between two lozenge-patterned borders. Decorative cast-iron plates on the undersides of the cantilevered structure create an ornamental ceiling for the gallery below. The floor and ceiling coverings are interrupted by a double-leaf metal hatch on the north side of each gallery. These “safe hoists,” no longer active, were intended to make it possible for tenants to avoid hoisting heavy safes and other freight through the windows. The main circulation core at the south side of the atrium includes a historic cast-iron staircase that curves around a central elevator shaft. Each gallery is surrounded by ornamental balustrades in the Queen Anne style, significant repeated elements within the space. Interior walls forming the boundary of the atrium contain deep door and window

openings that historically led into perimeter office spaces. While the order of the doors and windows has been rearranged to accommodate the layout of the hotel rooms, the historic rhythm of arched and flat headed openings, now restored with new millwork and plaster detailing, contributes to the atrium’s sense of place.

General Alterations

Undertaken as part of a historic rehabilitation tax credit project, the comprehensive restoration of the space completed in 2016 involved a combination of careful restoration, recreation of missing features based on existing examples, and sensitive insertion of modern elements. On the north, east, and west walls the walls and piers were stripped and resurfaced to match historic color schemes; all the plaster was restored or replicated; millwork was replicated based on surviving examples; doors and window units are replacements; room entrances are recessed and have double runs of millwork; elevator cabs and shaft enclosures have been replaced with new materials and finishes replicating the wall finishes on the other three elevations; life/fire safety equipment (sprinklers; smoke curtains; and glass corner barriers) was installed; other non-historic materials throughout the atrium include light fixtures; signage; elevator indicators; carpeting; and furniture.

The following description documents the historic features and non-historic elements and fabric within the atrium.

First story

The first floor historically had a T-shaped corridor connecting the Beekman Street entrance to the elevator lobby within the atrium, which was flanked by two stores whose footprints extended into the atrium. The partitions in the atrium and the roof of

the first-floor lobby corridor were removed c. 2001 and the storefronts were removed c. 2008, fully opening the first-story space within the volume of the atrium.¹ As part of the conversion of the Temple Court into The Beekman Hotel, the space now serves as the hotel's lounge and bar. In keeping with the effort to preserve the ambiance of the atrium, the space has been designed to be stylistically consistent with the upper levels of the atrium while being a fully functioning service area. Historic features at this level include the location of perimeter walls at the east and west of the atrium, dragon brackets and metal beams with decorative cutwork supporting the south side of the second-story gallery, and the historic cast-iron stair leading up to the floors above at the south side of the space.

Alterations

Two arched openings cut through the west wall of the atrium and defined by replicated millwork; two arched openings on the east wall infilled, one defined by replicated millwork; new arched openings added adjacent to elevator/stair hall on the south; elevator shafts, cabs, doors, call buttons, and floor indicators replaced, new elevator doors enframed within faux arched openings defined by replicated millwork; on the north, two piers, capped by non-historic crown molding, support a lintel incorporating air exchange ductwork; non-historic wood floor, partially covered in carpet, intentionally reflects the footprints of the stores that once occupied the space.

Second Story

The historic rhythm of the window, door, and other openings is intact. The second story, unlike the galleries above it, once incorporated the roofs of the stores below on the east, west, and north (except for the double-leaf hatch). The gallery has been recreated combining old and new materials. The historic south gallery is supported along the wall by

historic dragon brackets and at the corners by metal beams with decorative cutwork in the flanges and the underside covered in embossed cast-iron panels, the floor is covered by historic encaustic tile (with some infill as necessary).

Alterations

The finishes, materials, and design of the elevator surrounds on the south wall were installed as part of the 2016 renovation; the arrangement of window and door openings within the arched masonry openings on the north, east, and west walls were changed as part of this renovation. The non-historic east, west, and north galleries have been rebuilt with glass brick set in concrete and are supported by simple unornamented brackets. The underside has been left open to view. Non-historic carpet runners cover all four sides of the gallery. The entire balustrade has been replaced, square, paneled newels feature box-like tops with those at the southeast and southwest corners decorated with rosettes recalling the historic newels on the upper levels; non-historic glass panels set between simple balusters and newels are etched with the same stylized floral motif as the historic cast-iron panels on the galleries above; lighting; sprinklers and smoke curtains installed behind the historic trim of the balustrades at third story galleries above, and transparent glass panels installed at the corners to provide a seal for the fire suppression system when smoke curtains are deployed.

Third – Ninth Stories

The historic rhythm of the arched and flat-headed voids has been retained throughout the third through ninth stories. The historic galleries are supported from below by dragon brackets and metal beams with decorative cutwork in the flanges; the undersides of the galleries include the historic double-leaf hatches on the north and embossed metal plates that form ceilings for the floor below. The

historic cast-iron balustrades feature elaborate newels that partially extend below the level of the floor and serve as a meeting point for the two supporting beams at each corner, spindle-like balusters, and open cast-iron panels with stylized foliate ornament topped by a molded wood handrail. Below the balustrade on each side of the gallery, gently arched beams with punched or cut-work decoration in the flanges form part of the trim pieces below the balustrades. The ninth story retains its historic molding with paired modillions.

Alterations

The finishes, materials, and design of the elevator surrounds on the south wall were installed as part of the 2016 renovation; the arrangement of window and door openings within the arched masonry openings on the north, east, and west walls were changed as part of this renovation. Wood hand railings of the historic gallery balustrades on the third through ninth stories have been raised and discrete metal kick plates and vertical bars have been added as security measures; lighting; sprinklers and smoke curtains placed under or behind the historic trim of the gallery balustrades at the third through eighth floors, and the non-historic glass canopies on the ninth floor; transparent glass panels at the corners of the third through eighth floors provide a seal for the fire suppression system when smoke curtains are deployed.

Skylight and Monitor

The original cast-iron framed hipped-roof skylight and monitor rests on a raised curb between the two towers at the northwest and northeast corners of the roof. The frame of the skylight includes arched metal brackets and beams with cutwork decorated flanges. The monitors at the lower and upper level of the skylight have glazed panels topped by a beam with rosettes, the frame of each panel incorporates

decorative filigree at the window head.

Alterations

The glazing and some hardware have been replaced. The now stripped spandrel panels on the interior of the curb house louvers that are part of the air conditioning and smoke purge system, and the glazing is protected by clear solar film to reduce heat gain from the sun.²

Staircase

The historic staircase winds around the central elevator shaft from the first through ninth stories.³ Metal risers with rosettes support stone treads.⁴ The walls enclosing the outer curve of the staircase feature cast-iron spandrel panels embossed with birds, full-height panels decorated with a repeating foliate pattern, and decorative grille work panels which once opened onto the light court at the landings. Supporting beams feature cutwork. The staircase between the eighth and ninth floor also features cast-iron ceiling panels.

Alterations

Historically, the cast-iron panels continued onto the sides of the elevator shafts; these were removed when the elevator shafts were updated in the early 20th century.⁵ Glass panels inserted behind grille work and back lit; staircase from first to second story carpeted; treads of staircases from second to fourth stories covered with possibly historic diamond-plate.

History and Significance

Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel)
Atrium

Early Development of Beekman Street⁶

Prior to the arrival of European fur traders and the Dutch West India Company, Manhattan and much of the modern-day tri-state area was occupied by Indigenous Peoples who were members of the larger Algonquian group, the Lenape or Delaware, who spoke a dialect called Munsee. The main trail through Manhattan connecting the Battery to northern Manhattan and the Bronx ran along today's Park Row near the site of the Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel).⁷

Under the European colonists, the site on Beekman Street between Nassau Street and Theatre Alley changed owners several times. The property known by the late 17th or early 18th century as the Vineyard was sold to Thomas White in 1762. Although lost to forfeiture due to White's support of King George III during the American Revolution, the property was restored to his widow Ann by the commissioners of forfeiture in 1784. Offered for sale by her executors in 1828, the Clinton Hall Association and merchant, diarist, and one-term Mayor, Philip Hone purchased the property the following year. Clinton Hall was built and completed in 1830 to house the Mercantile Library which had been founded in 1821 as a subscription library for clerks employed by the city's merchants. Designed to read as a single structure, the western half of Clinton Hall housed Hone's Clinton Hotel while the eastern half housed the library, reading room, laboratory, and lecture room, with rental property on the upper two stories.

As residential New York moved uptown, the Mercantile Library Association followed, relocating to the Italian Opera House at Astor Place in 1854.⁸ Shortly before leaving for Greenwich Village, the Association sold the hall to the Nassau Bank and in 1856 the Park Bank (rechartered as the National Park Bank in 1865) purchased the Clinton Hotel on the corner of Theatre Alley.⁹ In addition to the banking facilities, the building was occupied by the offices of publications such as *The Independent* and *The Nation*, the New York office of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which sponsored lectures by noted abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Frederick Douglass; the Leggat Bros. bookstore, employment agencies, and the real estate agency of M. A. Ruland,¹⁰ later Ruland & Whiting, which would be a long-term tenant in the Temple Court Building and served as its rental agent.¹¹

The Temple Court Building¹²

Originally named the Kelly Building after the Irish-American merchant and banker who built it, the Temple Court Building is the earliest remaining tall "fireproof" office building in New York City, and a rare surviving office building of its era constructed around a full-height interior skylighted atrium. It was among the first of the major downtown office buildings to be erected after 1879, as the city began its recovery from the financial Panic of 1873 which resulted from a stock market crash in Europe that led to the failure of American financial institutions, including Jay Cooke & Co. one of the biggest banks in New York City.¹³

During the 19th century, commercial buildings in New York City developed from four-story structures modeled on Italian Renaissance *palazzi* to much taller skyscrapers that were made possible by technical advances in construction methods including iron floor beams, elevators, and fireproof building materials. Between 1870 and

1890, nine-and ten-story buildings transformed the streets of lower Manhattan south of City Hall. Early examples, all since demolished, included the seven-and one-half-story Equitable Life Assurance Company Building (1868-70, Gilman & Kendall and George B. Post), the ten-story Western Union Building (1872-75, George B. Post), and the ten-story Tribune Building (1873-75, Richard M. Hunt).

Two considerations became paramount in office and commercial building design as buildings of the period grew higher: fireproofing and a means of providing maximum light and ventilation. The common method for fireproofing metal joists and beams was to add brick arches below and poured concrete above. In the 1870s, numerous patented systems were introduced including that of fire-brick maker Balthasar Kreisler who patented a system of flat-arch hollow tiles in 1871.¹⁴ To provide light and air, contemporary architects devised several solutions, including open interior courts or light wells, C-shaped footprints with major light courts facing the street, and the interior court or atrium covered by a skylight.¹⁵

Architects Silliman & Farnsworth filed an application in April 1881 for the construction of a nine-story (ten stories including the two towers) office building, to be located at the southwest corner of Beekman and Nassau Streets for Eugene Kelly. Kelly had begun amassing the site in 1868 purchasing the National Park Bank (formerly the old Clinton Hotel) at Beekman Street and Theatre Alley;¹⁶ later adding the Nassau Bank building (1854-55, Mr. Warner) at Beekman and Nassau streets along with the remaining sections of Clinton Hall along Nassau Street.¹⁷ Both *The New York Times* and *Real Estate Record & Guide* carried lengthy and detailed descriptions of the proposed \$400,000 structure.¹⁸ According to the *Times*, “it will be one of the finest in the lower part of the City” and was to be constructed of granite to the third story,

above which it will be Philadelphia brick, and terra-cotta panels between the windows.”¹⁹

When completed in May 1883, the Temple Court Building’s design, employing elements of the Queen Anne and neo-Grec styles and executed in granite, brick, and terra cotta represented a shift from the *palazzo* model for office buildings begun by Richard M. Hunt with the *Tribune* Building (1873-75, demolished) among others.²⁰ The Temple Court Building was so successful that Kelly added an annex on Nassau Street designed by James M. Farnsworth in 1889 and completed in 1890. The Temple Court Building and Annex was designated a New York City Landmark in 1998.

Eugene Kelly (1808-1894)

Eugene Kelly was born in Ireland in 1808 and served as an apprentice to a draper, before immigrating to New York City in 1835 to work as a clerk for Donnelly & Co., one of New York’s foremost dry goods importers. With the help of the Donnellys, Kelly established a successful dry goods business of his own in Kentucky and later opened a branch of Donnelly & Co. in St. Louis, Missouri. Following the death of his first wife, the former Sarah Donnelly, he moved to San Francisco in 1850 and helped to found Donohoe, Murphy, Grant & Co., another dry goods firm. Seven years later he married Margaret Hughes, niece of Archbishop John H. Hughes of New York. By 1861 he had helped found two banking houses, Donohoe, Ralston & Co. (later Donohoe, Kelly & Co.) in San Francisco and Eugene Kelly & Co. in New York. After the Civil War, Kelly invested in the reconstruction of southern railroads and was a founder of the Southern Bank of Georgia in Savannah. His various financial endeavors made him a multimillionaire, and Kelly served as a director of the Bank of New York, Emigrant Savings Bank, National Park Bank, Lloyd’s, and Equitable Life Assurance Society. In addition to his business

interests Kelly was active in Democratic and Irish-American politics, and as a philanthropist supported both secular and Catholic institutions. In the latter case he served on the building committee for St. Patrick's Cathedral, as a trustee of Seton Hall College, and a founder and trustee of Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Kelly separated from his San Francisco firm in 1890, and at the time of his retirement in 1892 was estimated to have an estate worth between 10 and 15 million dollars. Eugene Kelly & Co. was dissolved shortly before his death in 1894. Kelly and members of his family are buried in the vault below the Lady Chapel of St. Patrick's Cathedral, a designated New York City Landmark.²¹

Silliman & Farnsworth²²

The firm of Silliman & Farnsworth, architects of the Temple Court Building, practiced from 1876 to 1882. James Mace Farnsworth (1847-1917) apparently began his career around 1872 and worked as a draftsman with Calvert Vaux by 1873. Benjamin Silliman, Jr. (1848-1901) was born in Louisville, Kentucky the third generation in his direct family line with the same name; his grandfather, considered "the most prominent and influential scientific man in America during the first half of the nineteenth century,"²³ had been a professor of chemistry and natural history at Yale (1802-53), while his father was also a noted professor of chemistry at Yale. Silliman, Jr. graduated from Yale University in 1870, studied architecture for three years in Charlottenburg (Berlin), Germany, and upon his return to the United States worked for the firm of Vaux, Withers & Co., where he met Farnsworth.

Silliman & Farnsworth obtained several prominent office and institutional building commissions, for which they produced designs influenced by the *Rundbogenstil* and the neo-Grec and Queen Anne styles, most executed in red brick

and terra cotta. Their widely praised Morse Building (1878-80, a designated New York City Landmark), at 140 Nassau Street, was an early tall "fireproof" office building (and the location of their office). The firm also designed the Vassar Brothers Laboratory (1879-80, demolished) at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., with a central tower capped by a pyramidal roof; the Orange Music Hall (1880, demolished) in Orange, N.J.; a hospital (1880, demolished) at Lexington Avenue and East 52nd Street; two commercial buildings at Nos. 19 and 21 East 17th Street (1881-82);²⁴ and Temple Court (1881- 83).

Farnsworth practiced independently from 1883 to 1897, producing numerous designs for commercial and office buildings and warehouses for prominent builder/developer John Pettit, including additions to the cast-iron Bennett Building (originally designed in 1872-73 by Arthur D. Gilman, a designated New York City Landmark) in 1890-94. He was responsible for the Singer Building (1886), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Farnsworth also designed the Temple Court Annex, built in 1889-90, and maintained his office in Temple Court in 1890-92. Associated with a number of other architects over the years, he worked with Charles E. Miller from 1897 to 1900, then with [J. A. Henry] Flemer & [V. Hugo] Koehler in 1900-01, and as part of Koehler & Farnsworth in 1907-10; he practiced independently until his death. Little is known of Silliman's subsequent practice, though he remained listed in New York City directories until around 1900. He moved to Yonkers around 1883, and former colleague George Martin Huss reminisced after Silliman's death that "I believe [he] built largely in Yonkers." At the time of his death, he was living in Harlem.²⁵

Interior Atriums

A significant feature of the Temple Court Building is

its interior design incorporating a nine-story skylighted atrium to provide natural light and air to the interior of the building. The modern atrium can trace its origins to ancient Roman domestic architecture. With advances in iron and glass manufacturing in the 19th century, the skylighted atrium became a popular feature in commercial architecture in both Europe and the United States. European examples of the period included the Burlington Arcade (1818-19, Samuel Ware) and Coal Exchange (1846-49, James B. Bunning, demolished) in London, Les Halles Centrales, (1853, Victor Baltard, demolished) and Magasins du Bon Marché (1876, Gustav Eiffel and Louis-Charles Boileau, later alterations) in Paris, and Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (1865-67, Giuseppe Mengoni) in Milan. The American use of the "skylighted interior court, or arcade," can be traced first to the three-story Arcade Building (1827-28, James C. Bucklin & Russell Warren) in Providence, R.I. The concept was later "adapted to iron construction in New York in the 1850's" in the five-story uptown A. T. Stewart Store (1859-62, John Kellum, demolished) at Broadway and 10th Street.²⁶ In addition to department stores and arcades, the atrium became a popular feature for hotels, libraries, exhibition halls, and office buildings.

Two significant libraries that featured cast-iron galleries around skylighted courts were the four-story State Department Library (1871-75) in Alfred B. Mullett's State, War and Navy Building, Washington, and the seven-story Peabody Institute Library (1876-78, Edmund G. Lind), Baltimore. The Shillito Store (1878, James W. McLaughlin; altered and court filled in), Cincinnati, had a six-story interior court, while the Model Hall (c. 1878-80, Adolf Cluss & Paul Schulze) of the U.S. Patent Office Building, Washington, consisted of a long two-story skylighted gallery, and the Pension Building (1882-85, Montgomery C. Meigs),

Washington, was constructed around a colossal three-and-one-half-story court.

In New York City, the New York Produce Exchange (1881-84, George B. Post, demolished), 2 Broadway, and the downtown A. T. Stewart Store²⁷ (after its conversion to offices in 1883- 84), among other buildings, had skylighted atriums that did not rise the full height of the structure (the courts were open above), a variant exemplified by the Rookery Building (1885-86, Burnham & Root), Chicago. Montgomery Schuyler described the eight-story Boreel Building at 115 Broadway (1878-79, Stephen Decatur Hatch, demolished), as having an "interesting plan, which is a large, glazed court upon which the inner offices open."²⁸ Among these, the Temple Court Building's atrium was the tallest and is the only remaining example.

The construction of the Temple Court Building with its full height nine-story interior atrium in 1883 makes it an early example of the use of the full-height interior skylighted atrium which culminated in the late nineteenth century. Prominent examples in office and commercial buildings include the ten-story Society for Savings Building (1887-90, Burnham & Root; atrium filled in) in Cleveland; the thirteen-story Chamber of Commerce Building (1888-89, Edward Baumann & Harris W. Huehl, demolished) in Chicago; the twelve-story Guaranty Loan Building (1888-90, Edward T. Mix, demolished) in Minneapolis; the five-story Cleveland Arcade (1888-90, John M. Eisenmann & George H. Smith) in Cleveland; the nine-story Brown Palace Hotel (1889-92, Frank E. Edbrooke) in Denver; the twenty-story Masonic Temple Building (1890-92, Burnham & Root, demolished) in Chicago; the eight-story court of the U.S. Post Office (1892-99, Willoughby J. Edbrooke) in Washington; and the five-story Bradbury Building (1893, George H. Wyman) in Los Angeles. Among the grand interior atriums still extant from the 19th century, the Temple

Court atrium is significant as a rare survivor of the type in New York City.²⁹

The skylighted atrium, although no longer as prolific as a practical means of providing light and ventilation as it was in the 19th century, continued to be used into the early 20th century as a feature in some buildings such as the Surrogate's Court (Hall of Records), 31 Chambers Street (1899-1911, John R. Thomas and Horgan & Slattery, a designated New York City interior and exterior landmark.). Having fallen out of favor for most of the 20th century, largely due to fire safety concerns, the enclosed atrium was revived in the mid-20th century in shopping malls, hotels, and commercial buildings,³⁰ such as the Ford Foundation Building, East 42nd Street (1963-67, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates (successor firm to Eero Saarinen Associates, a designated New York City interior as well as individual landmark); Citicorp Center (now 601 Lexington Avenue, 1973-78, Hugh Stebbins & Associates and Emery Roth & Sons) a designated New York City individual landmark); and the Marriott Marquis Hotel (1973-77, John Portman & Associates) in Times Square. The atrium continues to be a defining feature of commercial architecture in the 21st century.

Design of the Temple Court Atrium³¹

Temple Court is an important early and rare surviving example of an office building of its era constructed around an interior skylighted atrium in New York City. When plans for the new building were announced in 1881 the papers printed detailed accounts of the design of the building's interior. At the ground floor the building was to be accessed through a lobby from Beekman Street which connected to the main and elevator halls from which it was possible to view the full height of the atrium before ascending either by one of the three elevators or the ornamental iron and stone staircase to the

offices above.³² Each floor would have 17 office suites of various sizes arranged around a seven-foot wide gallery. As noted in *The New York Times* "The effect of the galleries on the eye is expected to be very rich. It is intended to decorate the interior court in colors, and the iron-work of the gallery railings, the elevator screens, and the balustrade of the staircase will be treated to correspond."³³ The wall surfaces were to be decorated with pilasters with ornamental caps and wood wainscoting, the office doors and windows arched and framed in ash with American ribbed glass lights, and the floors supported on ornamental iron brackets and laid in Spanish tiles. As a practical matter, a safe-hoist in the form of double-leaf hatches in the gallery floors was provided so tenants would not have to hoist their safes through the windows. Natural light and ventilation would come from the glass and ornamental iron skylight and the light court on the south behind the elevators and staircase.

Tenants

The Temple Court Building attracted a notable and diverse collection of office tenants in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Among the original tenants of the Temple Court Building were Ruland & Whiting (later Ruland & Benjamin), real estate agents,³⁴ the Nassau Bank, which occupied the corner at Nassau Street,³⁵ and *The Manhattan, An Illustrated Literary Magazine*. Other tenants in the first decades included lawyers, real estate agents, and architects including the prominent firms of Heins & LaFarge and J. M. Farnsworth,³⁶ along with a variety of merchants. In the first quarter of the 20th century real estate agents, lawyers, and merchants were joined by advertising and employment agencies. Among the tenants during this period were J. Frank Wheaton and James L. Curtis, two African American lawyers who also had an office in Harlem.³⁷ Some of the more unusual tenants were the Swedish Consul

General, the Irish Free State Consulate, and the National Rifle Association.³⁸ Although *The New York Times* had moved from its downtown building³⁹ to Longacre (now Times) Square in 1905 it maintained several branch offices including one in 7 Beekman Street, the storefront to the east of the Temple Court's main entrance. To the west of the entrance was an office of *The Chief*, the civil service newspaper.⁴⁰

Throughout the 20th century Temple Court continued to house a wide variety of office and commercial tenants, such as lawyers; accountants; employment agencies; administrative services; detectives; advertising agencies; publishers, including E. Belcher Hyde, publisher of insurance maps; insurance firms and brokers; real estate businesses, among others which were later joined by organizations like New York Public Interest Research Group and various Jewish organizations.⁴¹ Architect Joseph Pell Lombardi was one of the last tenants in the building before it was closed in 2001.⁴²

Later Building History and Restoration

The trustees of Eugene Kelly's estate in 1907 transferred the Temple Court Building and Annex (located on separate lots until 1961-62) to the Temple Court Co. (Thomas Hughes Kelly, president). Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank, which held the mortgage, took over the properties in 1942. Conveyed in 1945 to the Wakefield Realty Corp., they were acquired by the Region Holding Corp. (Rubin Shulsky, president) in 1946. The properties were transferred in 1953 to the Larsan Holding Corp./Satmar Realty Corp., and after several subsequent conveyances to other firms owned by the Shulsky family was sold to 5 Beekman Property Owner, LLC in 2012 with offices in the offices of GFI Development Inc.⁴³

The elevators, which had historically been open lifts, were enclosed in fireproof shaftways

sometime in the early 20th century and the atrium itself remained open until the 1950s, when it was enclosed to comply with changes in the building code.⁴⁴ This enclosure, though hiding the atrium from public view, fortunately protected the historic elements of its galleries behind false walls and dropped ceilings, allowing them to remain in place. The partitions and roof of the first-story lobby corridor were removed c. 2001 and stores were removed c. 2008 exposing the atrium to its full height as part of a development proposal for an office use. Subsequent proposals included a failed residential conversion which was later changed to convert it to a hotel.

In c. 2013, GFI Development, whose specialty is hotel properties, with the assistance of Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, preservation consultants, the architectural firm of Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel,⁴⁵ and the artists at EverGreene Architectural Arts began the work of converting the Temple Court Building into The Beekman Hotel and restoring the beauty of the building's signature atrium. The upper galleries were restored, and the first story became the Beekman Hotel's bar and lounge, with its design recalling decorative elements found elsewhere in the atrium. Along the galleries, the historic arched openings of former office spaces were maintained along with the flat headed openings over the hallways connecting to the annex. Surviving examples of the plasterwork, door/window enframements, and the door and window units informed the restoration, and the arrangement of doors and windows was configured to accommodate the layout of hotel rooms. Floor and wall finishes, as well as historic ironwork, were restored to match their original appearance.⁴⁶

In order to maintain the atrium as an open space, an innovative fire safety system consisting of sprinklers and smoke curtains was designed specifically for the Beekman Hotel and implemented

here. To safely minimize the spread of smoke, fire-rated curtains drop down to the floor of each gallery from a panel hidden behind the balustrade above, and transparent glass panels help seal gaps between the curtains at the four corners. (At the ninth story the curtains drop from a non-historic glass canopy over the gallery that enables them to meet naturally at the corners.)

Upon its opening in 2016, The Beekman Hotel was prominently featured in travel and trade publications. In 2017 GFI Development and its creative partners were honored by the preservation community receiving the Preservation/Adaptive Re-Use Award from the Victorian Society New York, a Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Excellence in Historic Preservation Award from the Preservation League of New York State.

Conclusion

The Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel) Atrium is a stunning, nine-story skylit interior atrium, an early and rare surviving example of a 19th century office building interior built around such a feature. Long enclosed and inaccessible to the public, it was sensitively rehabilitated between 2013 and 2016 to become the central feature of The Beekman Hotel. The carefully restored historic elements along the upper galleries, finely crafted plaster and millwork based on surviving examples, recreation of the second-story gallery, and a sensitive re-envisioning of the ground floor into an open, inviting space successfully recreated the historic ambiance of one of New York City's most special interior spaces.

Endnotes

¹ “The Kelly Building: Details of a Magnificent Business Structure about to Be Erected,” *New York Times (NYT)*, April 4, 1881, 5; Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, *Temple Court Building Historic Preservation Certificate Application, Part 2*, (January 2013), 35; email correspondence, Ward Dennis, Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, June 3, 2024.

² Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, *Temple Court Building Historic Preservation Certificate Application, Part 2*, (January 2013), 32.

³ The staircase continues to the tenth floor but the run between the ninth and tenth stories is not part of the designation.

⁴ The treads at the first story were marble and those above slate. “The Kelly Building,” *NYT*, April 4, 1881, 5.

⁵ Ward Dennis, Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, May 22, 2024.

⁶ The earliest record of the property dates to the Dutch colonial period when the parcel, roughly a square from Nassau Street to Broadway between Ann and Beekman streets was conveyed by Director Willem Kieft to Cornelius Van Tienhoven in 1646. In 1686 it was claimed by the British Governor Thomas Dongan who laid it out as a garden. After his return to Ireland, it became a pleasure garden called the Vineyard. Thomas Dongan, a relative, sold the property to Thomas White in 1762. However, with the permission of Lt. Governor Cadwallader Colden a theater had already been erected the previous year at the southwest corner of Beekman and Nassau Streets and would remain there until demolished by a mob in 1766. It was here in November 1761 that the first performance of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* was given in New York. Thomas White, who as an Englishman supported the king during the revolution, lost his property to forfeiture but it was returned to the family in 1784 when the commissioners of forfeiture conveyed it to his widow Ann. I. N. Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915-1928), 1: 457; 4: 719, 721, 723, and 764; 6: 155-156. (It is to be noted that elsewhere in his work, Stokes locates the theater on the east side of Nassau Street on block 92. Ibid, 3: 932).

⁷ Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City: A Visual Celebration of Nearly 400 Years of New York City’s History* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1994), 17; Robert Steven Grumet, *Native American Place Names in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1981), 3; Reginald Pelham Bolton, *Indian Paths in*

the Great Metropolis (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1922), map II.

⁸ New York County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 251, p. 210 and 212 (May 1, 1829, recorded May 18, 1829); “Clinton Hall,” *Evening Post*, June 22, 1829, 2; “Clinton Hall,” *Evening Post*, November 3, 1830, 2. Elaine Weber Pascu, “Mercantile Library Association,” in *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. by Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 750-751.

⁹ New York County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 631, p. 232 (April 18, 1853); Liber 699, p. 495 (recorded March 23, 1856); “Commercial Matters,” *New-York Tribune*, January 26, 1856, 8.

¹⁰ Classified advertisements *NYT*, September 29, 1859, 5; January 10, 1862, 7; February 11, 1862, 7; December 6, 1875, 5; *New York Tribune*, March 12, 1874, 8; *New York Herald*, April 13, 1870, 10; New York City Directories, 1860-61, 1861-62.

¹¹ “Old Firm to Move to New Uptown Offices,” *New York Herald*, July 17, 1921, 59.

¹² This section adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Temple Court Building and Annex Designation Report, LP-1967* (New York: City of New York, 1998), 3-4, prepared by Jay Shockley.

¹³ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Financial Panic of 1873,” (<https://home.treasury.gov/about/history/freedmans-bank-building/financial-panic-of-1873>, accessed April 25, 2024).

¹⁴ The Temple Court Building was described by its rental agents Ruland & Whiting as “fireproof”, but no details were included. Kreisler’s system was first employed in New York in the U.S. Post Office in 1872-73 (demolished). “Special Notices,” *Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide (RERBG)*, March 18, 1882, 246; LPC, *Temple Court Building and Annex Designation Report*, 9 (fn. 11).

¹⁵ LPC, *Temple Court Building and Annex Designation Report*, 3.

¹⁶ Kelly was elected to the board of directors of the Park Bank in 1860. In 1868, National Park Bank moved to its new headquarters on Broadway. “Monetary Affairs,” *NYT*, July 2, 1860, 2; LPC, *Temple Court Building and Annex Designation Report*, 3; “Park Bank Building,” *New York Tribune*, December 16, 1868, 5.

¹⁷ The owners of the Nassau Bank replaced the corner of Clinton Hall with a five-story bank building executed in Caen stone and measuring 50 feet 4 inches on Beekman Street and 47 feet 6 inches on Nassau Street, designed by a Mr. Warner in 1854. The remaining sections of Clinton Hall on Nassau Street were untouched as was the Clinton Hotel. "The Building Stones," *NYT*, November 16, 1854, 2; "The Architectural Aspects of Our Streets," *NYT*, June 7, 1855, 4; *King's Handbook of New York City* (Boston, Moses King, 1892; reprinted New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2001), 780; New York County, Office of the Register, Liber 1065, p. 554 (September 28, 1868, recorded October 24, 1868); Liber, 1503, p. 430 (recorded October 2, 1879); Liber 1604, p. 128 (April 28, 1882, recorded May 2, 1882).

¹⁸ "The Kelly Building," *NYT*, April 4, 1881, 5; *RERBG*, April 16, 1881, 362; "Special Notices," *RERBG*, March 18, 1882, 246; "Sky Building in New York," *The Building News*, September 7, 1883, 363-364.

¹⁹ *NYT*, April 4, 1881, 5.

²⁰ LPC, *Temple Court Building and Annex Designation Report*, 4.

²¹ Kelly obituary, *NYT*, *New York Herald*, and *New-York Daily Tribune*, December 20, 1894, 13, 10, and 4; "Eugene Kelly," *Dictionary of American Biography* 5 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 307-8; *Who Was Who in America*, historical vol. (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Co., 1963), 290; John Delaney, *Dictionary of American Catholic Biography* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 289; Leland Cook, *St. Patrick's Cathedral: A Centennial History* (New York: Quick Fox, 1979); "Kelly to Complete Lady Chapel," *NYT*, August 3, 1930, II, 3.

²² LPC, *Bennett Building Designation Report (LP-1937)* (New York: City of New York, 1995), prepared by Gale Harris, and *Ladies' Mile Historic District Designation Report (LP-1609)* (New York: City of New York, 1989), vol. 2, 1014; Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1840-1900* (New York: Committee. for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979); James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (New York: Committee. for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989); Trow's N.Y.C. Directory (1876-1884); "Benjamin Silliman" [father and grandfather], *Dictionary of American Biography* 9, 160-164; Elizabeth Daniels, *Main to Mudd: An Informal History of Vassar College Buildings* (Poughkeepsie: Vassar College, 1987), 24-25; "Vassar Brothers Laboratory ...," *American Architecture and Building News (AABN)*, May, 29, 1880, 237; "Orange Music Hall ...

," *AABN*, August 28, 1880, 102; "Private Hospital...," *AABN*, September 4, 1880, 114; "The Morse Building ...," *AABN*, October 9, 1880, 174; "The Singer Building ...," *Building*, January 2, 1886, 6; Silliman obit., *AABN*, February 16, 1901, 49; George Martin Huss, "Benjamin Silliman: A Correction," *AABN*, February 23, 1901, 63; "James Mace Farnsworth," *Find-a-Grave* (Internet, accessed March 19, 2024).

²³ "Benjamin Silliman." *Dictionary of American Biography*, 160.

²⁴ These buildings are located within the Ladies' Mile Historic District.

²⁵ "Communications," *AABN*, February 23, 1901, 71, 1313; "Obituary Notes," *NYT*, February 6, 1901, 9.

²⁶ "Atrium (architecture)" *Wikipedia* (accessed April 28, 2024); Carl Condit, *American Building Art: The Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 67-69. 45.

²⁷ The A. T. Stewart Store (later the New York Sun Building from 1919 to 1952) (1845-46, Joseph Trench & Co.; 1850- 53, Trench & Snook; 1872, Frederick Schmidt; 1884, Edward D. Harris; 1921), 280 Broadway, is a designated NYC Landmark.

²⁸ Montgomery Schuyler, "Recent Building in New York II. Commercial Buildings," *AABN*, April 16, 1881, 183.

²⁹ Preceding discussion of atria is largely adapted from LPC, *Temple Court Building and Annex Designation Report*, 5-6.

³⁰ Roger K. Lewis, "Shaping the City: Social, Economic Factors Converged to Revive Atrium in Early '60s," *Washington Post*, September 20, 1985 (accessed April 28, 2024).

³¹ This description is based on information provided in "The Kelly Building," *NYT*, April 4, 1881, 5.

³² The lobby was described as being 11 feet wide by 22 feet deep; the main hall was defined by the walls of the two stores at either side of the main entrance that extended 50 feet into the interior. The treads of the staircase were to be marble from the first to second stories and slate above the second story.

³³ The original elevators were likely birdcage elevators with open shaftways.

³⁴ The firm, one of the oldest realty firms in the city was established as M. A. Ruland in 1867, becoming Ruland & Whiting by 1875 and Ruland & Benjamin in 1917. A branch office remained at the Temple Court after the firm moved its main office to midtown in 1921. Manly A.

Ruland (c. 1834-1907) had been associated with two publications, *New York Independent* and *The Nation* (both of which had offices on Beekman Street), before entering the real estate business. “Old Firm to Move to New Uptown Offices,” *New York Herald*, July 17, 1921, 59; Ad, *New York Daily Herald*, November 24, 1875, 2; “Manly A. Ruland,” *NYT*, May 19, 1907, 7.

³⁵ Nassau Bank remained at this location until at least 1922. “Out Among the Builders,” *RERBG*, April 16, 1881, 362; “Bank Sues Mrs. Lebaudy,” *NYT*, June 18, 1922, 14.

³⁶ Francis, 30, 38; Ward, 34.

³⁷ Ads., *The New York Age*, February 9, 1911, 7; July 6, 1914, 8.

³⁸ “Commercial Leases,” *NYT*, April 10, 1919, 10; “Irish-American Trade,” *NYT*, May 18, 1922, 19; “City and Suburban News,” *NYT*, August 4, 1886, 8.

³⁹ 41 Park Row (1888-89, George B. Post) is now owned by Pace University. It is a designated New York City Landmark.

⁴⁰ Ad., *New York Evening World*, March 25, 1914, 2; [Publication information], *NYT*, April 20, 1916, 12.

⁴¹ Manhattan Address Directories, 1929, 1929-30, 1935, 1940, 1945, 1950, 1955, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1986.

⁴² S. Jhoanna Robledo, “A Look Inside the Accidentally Preserved 5 Beekman Street,” *Intelligencer: Real Estate*, September 9, 2014

(<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2014/09/look-inside-5-beekman-street-video.html>, accessed May 12, 2020).

⁴³ New York County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, CRFN 2012000133847, March 15, 2012 (ACRIS).

⁴⁴ It is unclear when the elevators were enclosed in shaftways, possibly at the time the hydraulic lifts were replaced with electric ones in 1925. New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, ALT 1764-1925, BN152-1952, and BN3200-1951.

⁴⁵ Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel was founded in 1995 by principals Randolph Gerner, Richard N. Kronick, and Miguel Valcarcel. A full-service firm, GKV’s portfolio of commercial and residential work includes projects in the hospitality and historic preservation areas. In addition to the conversion of the Temple Court Building into The Beekman Hotel (and the design of the adjacent 51-story condominium), GKV’s other preservation projects include the restoration of the main lobby, public hallways, and elevator cabs of the former Bowery Savings Bank on East 42nd Street (a designated New York City Individual and Interior Landmark), and the polychrome terra-cotta embellished Childs Restaurant at 2101 Boardwalk in Coney Island (a designated New York City Landmark).

⁴⁶ The metal finishes were restored (using intumescent paint) to match the original “silver bronze varnish.” Ward Dennis, Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, May 22, 2024.

Findings and Designation

Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel)
Atrium

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel) Atrium has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City, state, and the nation.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 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 an Interior Landmark the Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel) Atrium consisting of the volume of the atrium as defined by a line established by the exterior walls of the second story gallery, descending to the floor of the first story and ascending to the ninth story, and terminating in a glazed, cast-iron skylight, and the fixtures and interior components of this space, which may include but are not limited to the floor, wall, and ceiling surfaces; glazing, doors and trim; cast-iron staircase from first to ninth story; cast-iron galleries with balustrades, decorative supporting brackets, encaustic tile flooring, cast-iron ceiling plates, and double-leaf floor hatches; and flat- and round-arched door and window openings; and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 90, Lot 7503 (formerly 14) as its Landmark Site, as illustrated in the attached map.



Temple Court Building (now The Beekman Hotel) Atrium
5 Beekman Street (aka 3-9 Beekman Street; 119-133 Nassau Street;
10 Theatre Alley)
Bilge Kose, May 2024



Skylight

Bilge Kose, May 2024



Galleries

Bilge Kose, May 2024



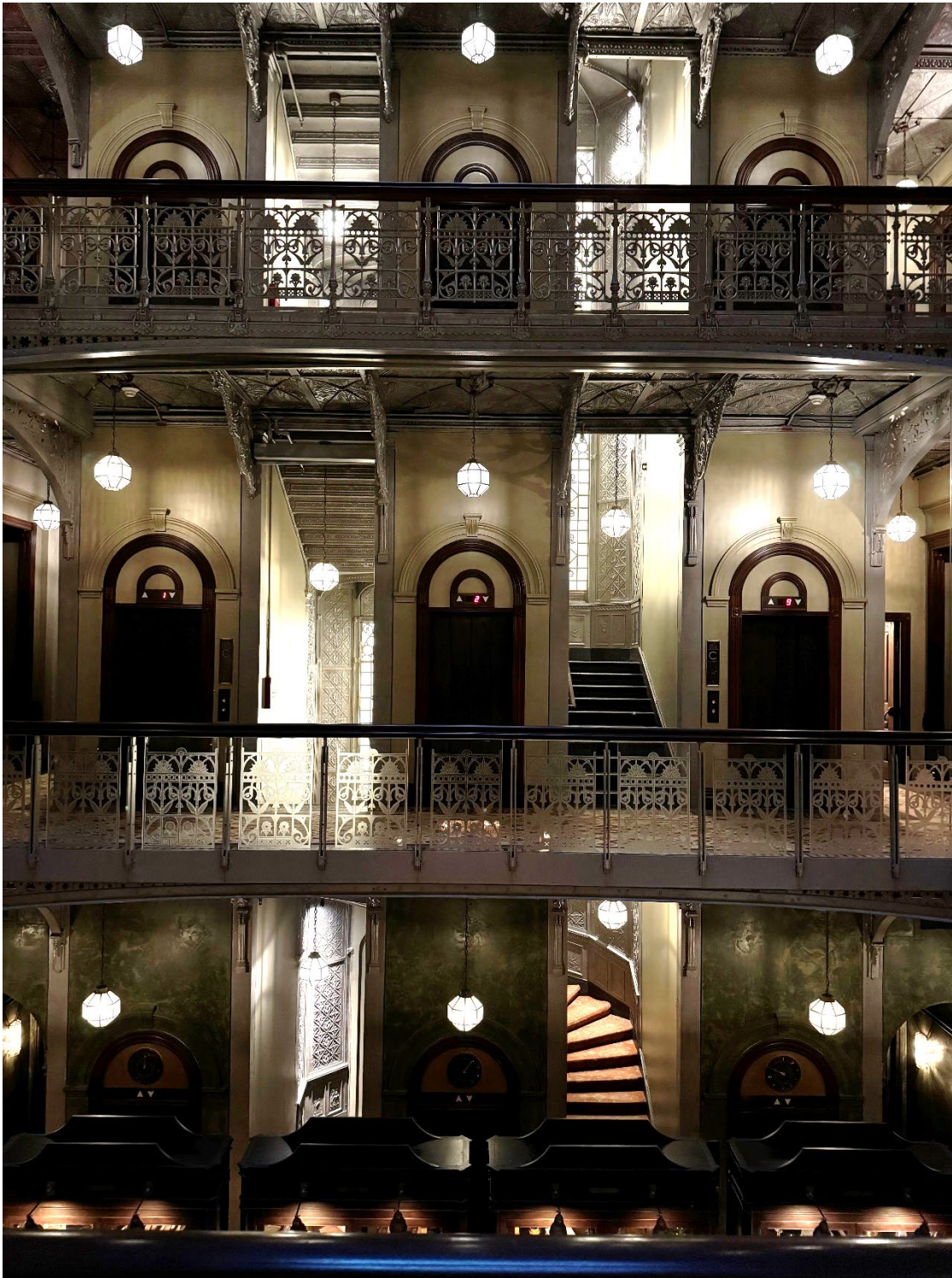
Historic balustrade detail
Marianne S. Percival, May 2024



**Second story gallery
balustrade detail**
Marianne S. Percival, May 2024



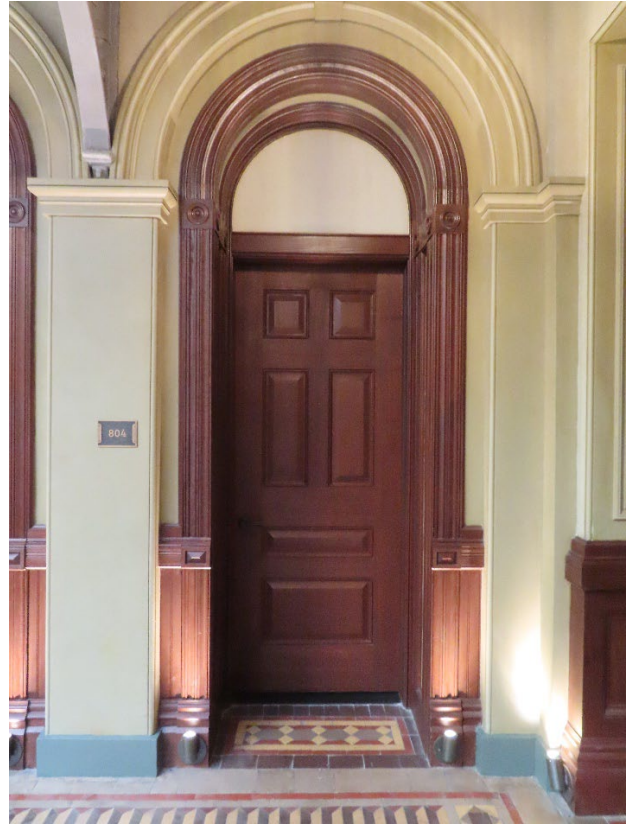
Typical floor, view to southeast (top); Dragon and cutwork brackets (bottom)
Marianne S. Percival, May 2024



Circulation core
Kate Lemos McHale, 2024



Staircase detail
Marianne S. Percival, 2024



Examples of replacement window and door units and millwork within historic openings
Marianne S. Percival, 2024



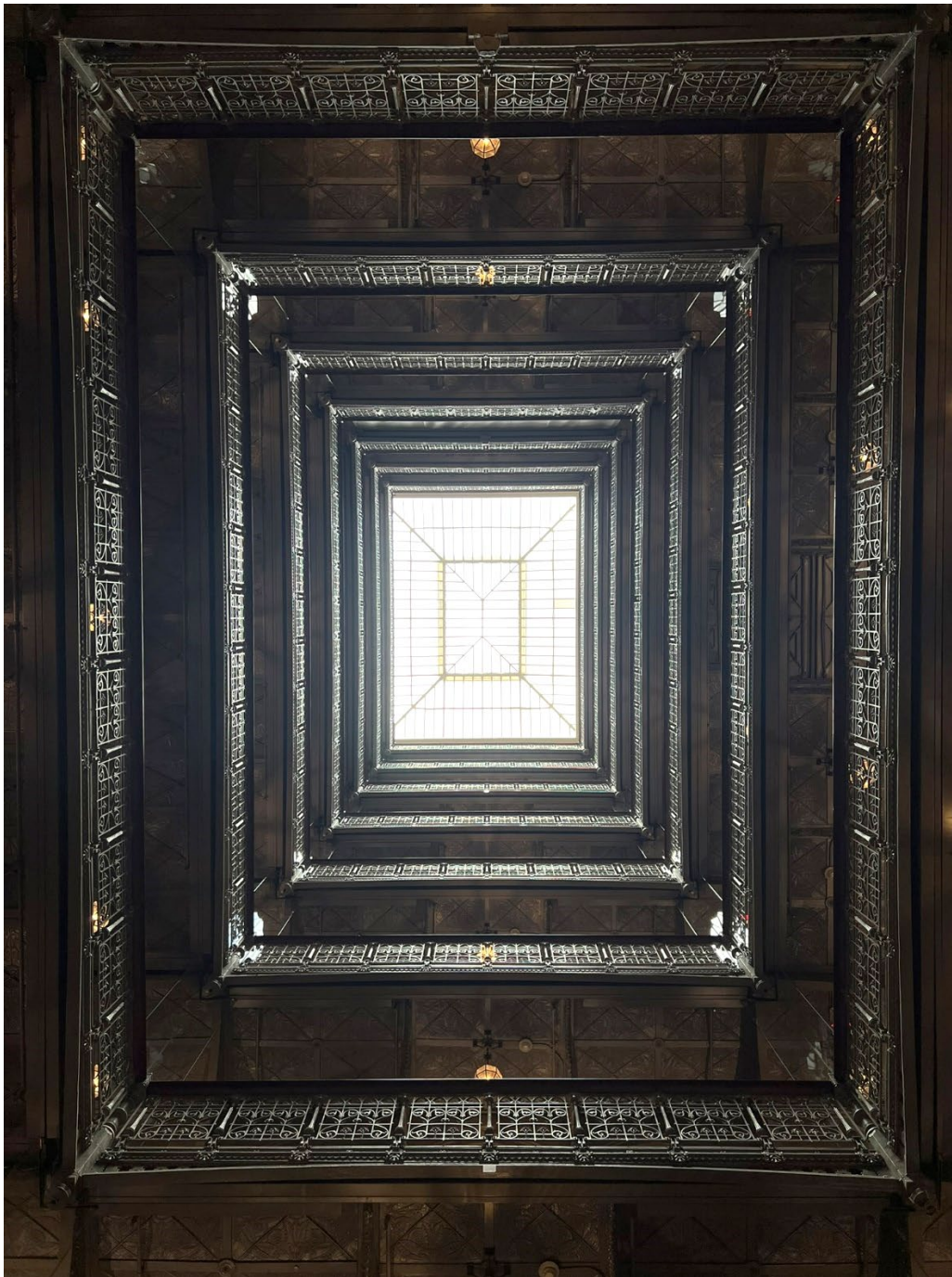
Bar and Lounge (view to northwest)
Bilge Kose, 2024



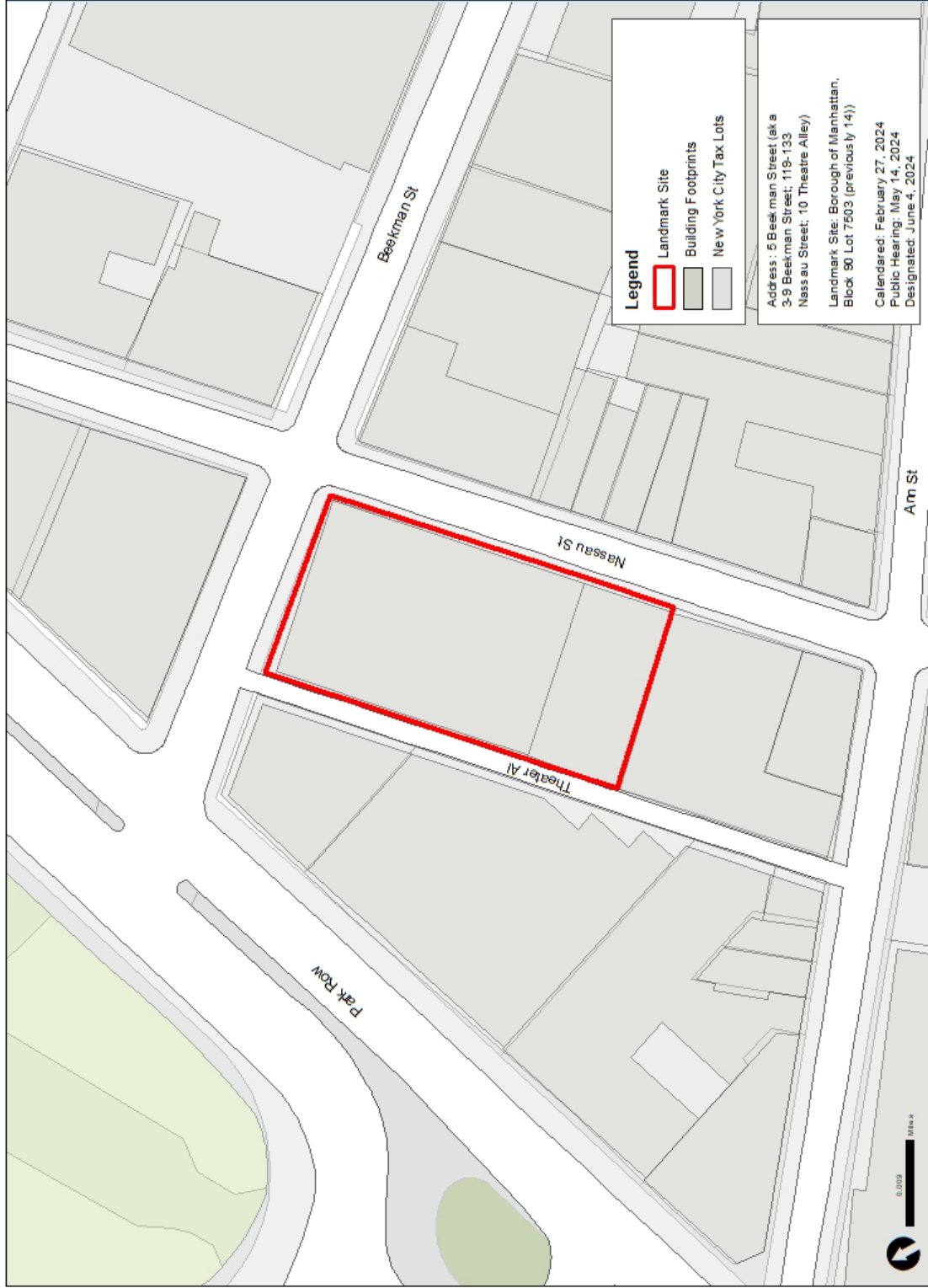
Lounge and atrium (view east)
Bilge Kose, 2024

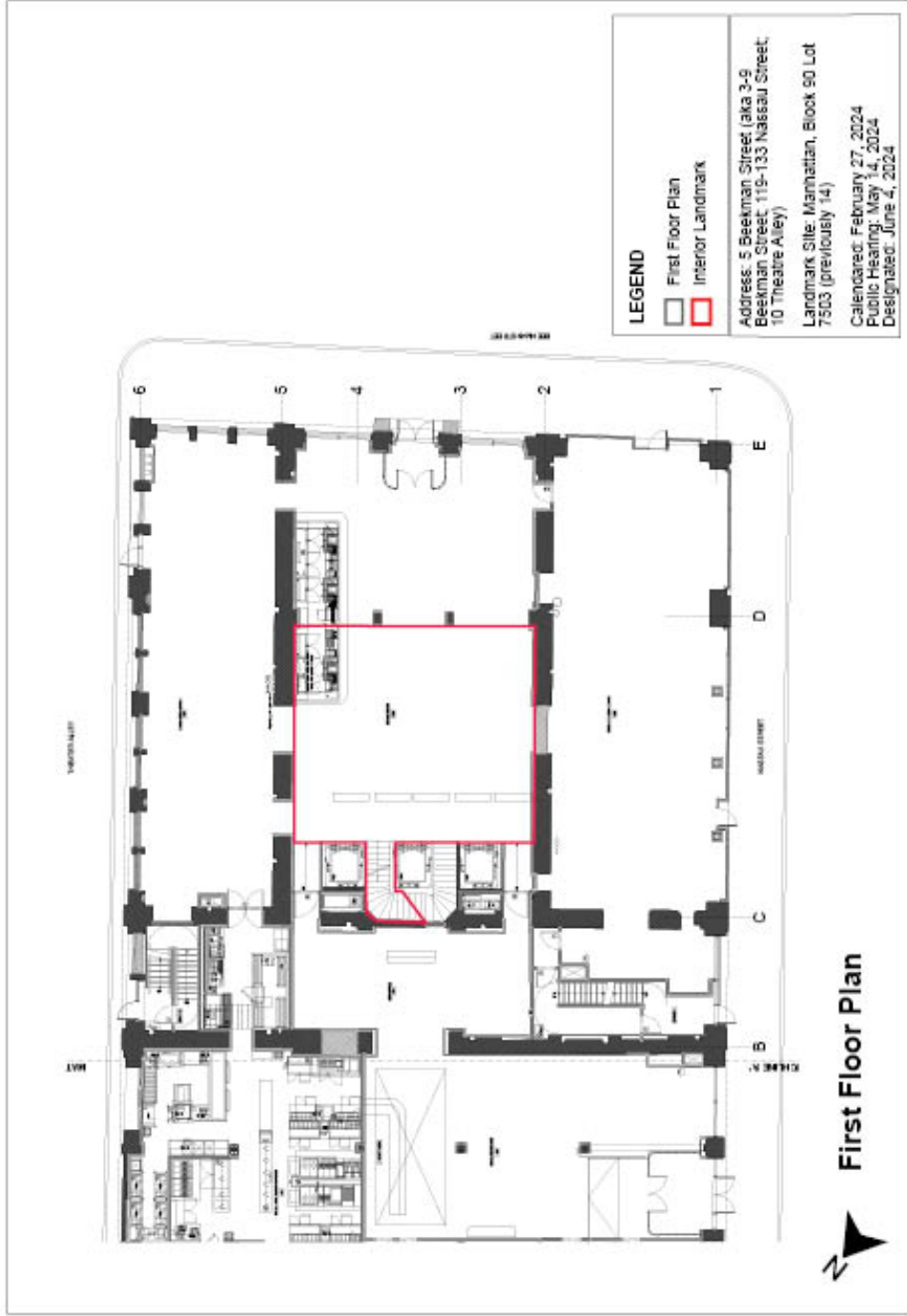


Smoke curtains
Marianne S. Percival, 2024



Skylight and galleries from below
Bilge Kose, 2024





LEGEND

- First Floor Plan
- Interior Landmark

Address: 5 Beekman Street (aka 3-9 Beekman Street, 119-133 Nassau Street, 10 Theatre Alley)

Landmark Site: Manhattan, Block 90 Lot 7503 (previously 14)

Calendar: February 27, 2024
Public Hearing: May 14, 2024
Designated: June 4, 2024

First Floor Plan

