

Landmarks Preservation Commission
August 29, 1989, Designation List 220
LP-1564

(Former) HELEN MILLER GOULD STABLE, 213 West 58th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1902-03; architects: York & Sawyer.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1030, Lot 24.

On November 12, 1985, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the former Helen Miller Gould Stable as a Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 19). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation; two letters were received in support of designation. No one spoke against the proposed designation. The representative of the owner, Mr. John Pappas, President of the Board of Trustees of the Unity Center of Practical Christianity, voiced no objection to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The former Helen Miller Gould Stable, an early work of the noted firm of York & Sawyer, is an eminently pure example of the late French Renaissance style and set an exceptionally high standard of carriage house design. The facade presents the style's general characteristics, including symmetry, vertical correspondence, the combination of limestone and brick laid in Flemish bond with dark headers, aediculated dormers, the high hipped roof of slate and the tall flanking chimneys, while details culled from early 17th century prototypes successfully evoke the architecture of the reign of Henri IV. Built in 1902-03, this stable, the only one of the many lining this mews-like section of West 58th Street to survive unaltered and intact, adds dignity to the street with its distinguished facade design.

Neighborhood History and Context

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the section of West 58th Street between Seventh Avenue and Broadway, resembled a mews; contemporary landbooks indicate that private stables as well as several commercial liveryies stood on many of the lots along the street. Local residents required stabling for the horses they maintained for their own use, while those who enjoyed driving or riding in Central Park appreciated the convenience of nearby liveryies. This stretch of West 58th Street between Broadway and Fifth Avenue, located as it was between the first class residential precincts along Central Park South and West 57th Street as well as its proximity to the mansions along Fifth Avenue, made it available as a service street. Even the presence of a municipal firehouse (Engine Company 23, from 1884 until 1906 at 233 West 58th Street and from 1906 until the present at 215 West 58th Street) and its horse-drawn apparatus was compatible with the rest of the street.

Helen Miller Gould and Her Stable

Helen Miller Gould (1868 - 1938) was the third of the six children, and eldest daughter of the transportation and communications tycoon Jay Gould and his wife (the former Helen Miller), and their eldest daughter.¹ Her mother died when she was twenty, leaving her to manage her father's household and to continue the education of her younger sister Anna, then thirteen, and youngest brother Frank, age eleven. When Jay Gould died in 1892, each of his children inherited one sixth of his considerable fortune. Helen Miller Gould was bequeathed her father's house at 579 Fifth Avenue and continued to look after her younger siblings. It was not until her forty-fourth year that Helen Miller Gould married Finley Johnson Shepard, an administrator for one of her father's railroads. She enjoyed the railway inspection tours she took periodically and it was on one of these that she met Mr. Shepard.² Her father's public image had been a poor one -- he had been labelled one of the "robber barons." In contrast Helen Miller Gould Shepard devoted her life to supporting worthy causes. Her generous nature and her many philanthropies prompted the New York Times in her obituary to call her the "best loved woman in the country."³

Late in 1901 Miss Gould purchased a lot on the north side of West 58th Street between Seventh Avenue and Broadway on which to construct a new stable, commissioned from the firm of York & Sawyer.⁴ Because an existing three-story stable on the site first had to be demolished, work on the new stable did not begin until June 16, 1902. It was finished on April 30, 1903. How Miss Gould selected the firm of York & Sawyer is not known. Perhaps she had met one or both of the partners when they were still employed at McKim, Mead & White, the firm responsible for the Gould Memorial Library, a designated New York City Landmark, and the Gould Dormitory, on University Heights in the Bronx. Both begun in 1895, these were her gift to New York University in memory of her father. Or perhaps it was her younger brother Frank Gould, for whom York & Sawyer designed a riding stable building at 217 West 57th Street about 1900 (demolished 1950), due south of his sister's stable site, who introduced her to the firm.

York & Sawyer

Edward Palmer York (1863 - 1928) studied architecture at Cornell in 1887-89, then entered the office of McKim, Mead & White in 1890 where he became Stanford White's assistant. He remained until 1898 when his partnership with Phillip Sawyer (1868 - 1949) was established. Sawyer, first studied engineering and then architecture at Columbia University, graduating in 1889. For the next two years he held positions related to his engineering background. In 1891 he entered the McKim, Mead & White office only to leave a year later for the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris where he was placed in Odile Redon's atelier. His sketch books reflect his ability to observe the structural components that are the basis of any given style, their width and breadth and the shadows they cast. Sawyer recalled that when the two were still with McKim, Mead & White, that York had a desk while he, Sawyer, worked at a drafting table. Their strengths were complementary. For York drawings were a means to an end; he never made any himself for he was occupied with overall management. Sawyer's greatest pleasure was rounding out a building on paper to its last

details.⁵ Best known for their bank buildings, York & Sawyer carried out commissions as varied as the tall office building at 225 Broadway, the University of Michigan Law School, and the Kensico Dam.

The Design of the Helen Miller Gould Stable

Although York & Sawyer are best known for their bank buildings, a small nucleus of stable buildings figures prominently early in the partnership -- those for the Gould family in Manhattan and one in Tarrytown.⁶ Stables have particular requirements, especially within the vertical configuration dictated by a narrow, urban lot. Miss Gould's stable was to house not only her horses and the vehicles they drew but the feed and hay they consumed and the bales of hay which furnished their stalls. It was to be a residence for the coachman and a groom as well. Sawyer's solution was the conventional one: animals and vehicles on the ground story; feed, hay and straw on the second,⁷ and an apartment on the third and fourth stories. Adequate ventilation was particularly important. The two massive chimneys flanking the stable's hip roof enclose ventilating flues.

Sawyer's facade for Miss Gould's stable is of French derivation (Plate 1). This may reflect his Ecole bias, or he may have been impressed with the unique clarity of Henri IV's civic improvements for Paris. Certainly the great, arched fronton of rusticated limestone which he designed for Frank Gould's riding stable on wider West 57th Street⁸ would not have been appropriate to the scale dictated by the twenty-five foot lot fronts along the narrower width of West 58th Street. Elements of Miss Gould's stable facade suggest the uniform and symmetrical elevations of the four story buildings which defined both Henri IV's new squares, the Place Dauphine (1607) and the Place Royale (1610) - now the Place des Vosges.⁹ But Sawyer was familiar enough with the work of Jean Metezeau, Salomon de Brosse, and Francois Mansart to introduce a variety of details inspired by their work but with no immediately traceable provenance: the subtle vertical correspondence; the limestone tethering rings flanking the arched entrance (Plate 2); the juxtaposition of the round edged bands of rusticated limestone to the precise and crisply angulated limestone above; the flat arch voussoirs of the third story windows across whose faces the entablature frieze molding is carried (Plate 3); the triglyph brackets supporting the cornice. The effect is dignified and suave.

Building Description

This stable, four stories and a basement, is constructed of limestone and brick laid up in Flemish Bond with dark headers. Characteristic of the late French Renaissance style -- associated with the reign of Henri IV -- the limestone is used for those parts of the facade where the load is greatest: the ground story arch, the quoins at the wall angles, the window frames, and the entablature. The attenuated hipped roof, flanked by a lower mansard, masks the fourth story. The massive flanking chimneys are also characteristic of the style.

The broad, three-centered arch entrance is the most prominent feature of the stable's ground story, informing the ornamental program dependent upon it: the granite base, the elaborate water table, the banded limestone rustication, and elbow voussoirs. The limestone water table, resting upon

the granite base, is separated by the arch and each side is treated individually, though identically (Plate 2). A generous cavetto supports a thick, oblong molding. Superimposed upon the cavetto and molding are square blocks on whose surfaces are carved cleated, pendant tethering rings. The upper and lower edges of the banded rustication are rounded (Plate 4). Originally solid doors had filled the arch; today the entrance is glazed, framed in steel with a simple configuration of thin steel mullions echoing the tripartite bay above.¹⁰ Two narrow windows, flanking the arched entrance, pierce the rustication. They are screened with ornamental wrought-iron grilles painted black (Plate 2). Three consoles -- the swagged keystone of the entrance arch and those flanking with pendant guttae -- support the second story balcony.

A thick, oblong molding separates the limestone ground story from the limestone and brick of the second and third stories. The base of the second story balcony projects from this molding and carries a wrought-iron balustrade.¹¹ Rising from behind the balcony (Plate 5), a two story smooth-faced ashlar, limestone bay breaks through the entablature, terminating as an aediculated dormer in the base of the hipped roof. The deeply set, wood sash casement and transom windows on both the second and third stories are contained within this tripartite bay.¹² Their present configuration and material are characteristic of the building's style. The cavetto [a concave molding] of the building's water table is repeated in the spandrels of the third story windows. The sides of this bay are keyed into the Flemish bond and mirror the limestone quoins. To accommodate the fourth story dormer, the entablature is articulated as two separate but identical elements.¹³

The dormer's limestone balconet and its wrought-iron railing are supported by two brackets projecting from the architrave (Plate 3).¹⁴ The dormer's limestone aedication (Plate 6) consists of an eared architrave supported by volutes, a laurel frieze and denticulated pediment. Behind it rises the high hipped roof of slate and lower, flanking mansard. Above the dormer there is an eyebrow-hooded ventilator. The tall flanking chimneys are of brick with limestone quoins and caps. Limestone volutes, precisely articulated, support the base of the chimneys. Apparently the chimney pots are limestone. A copper cap with two finials crowns the hipped roof. The lower mansard roof, also of slate, is visible between the chimneys and the hipped roof (Plate 7).

In 1921 this carriage house and stable was converted to a private garage and the interior was altered to accommodate four automobiles. The second and third floors became an apartment for a chauffeur. At Mr. Shepard's death in 1944 the building passed from Gould ownership. In 1957 the interior was renovated as a custom shoe show room and two apartments. Since 1982 it has been the home of the Unity Center for Practical Christianity which has owned the building since 1983.

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NOTES

1. Jay Gould's most visible companies were the Missouri-Pacific Railroad, the Manhattan Railway Company and the Western Union Telegraph Company.
2. They were brought together while tending to the injured after a train wreck in Wisconsin in 1912.
3. Helen Miller Gould obituary, "Mrs. F.J. Shepard Dies of Stroke," New York Times, Dec. 21, 1938, pp.1; 23.
4. New Buildings Docket 1900-02, p.58, NB117-02. John J. Tucker & Son were the contractors.

Miss Gould bought Lots 24 and 41 on Block 1030, which extended through the block. Assembled by Susan Twombly, they were sold to Lambert Suydam who, in turn, sold them to Miss Gould. A house stood on Lot 41 facing Central Park South until about 1952 when it was pulled down and the present 210 Central Park South was constructed on it and three contiguous lots. It was the stable (1891) to this house which Miss Gould caused to be demolished, to make way for her new stable.

5. Phillip Sawyer, Edward Palmer York (Stonington, 1951), p.23.
6. Frank M. Snyder, "Stable at Tarrytown," Building Details, Part II, New York, 1907, No. 12. The curatorial staff at Lyndhurst, which after 1905 was Miss Gould's, has not been able to identify this stable building.
7. The storage of feed (oats, bran, barley, nuts, chaff), hay and straw must take into consideration both flammability and weight. To protect the valuable property below, Sawyer called for Guastavino vaulting over the ground story to carry the weight of the stored feed and straw above. McKim, Mead & White's stable at Edwin D. Morgan's Beacon Rock, Newport, estate has Guastavino thimble vaults above the horse stalls. Both York and Sawyer may have known the stable. Certainly they would have known other projects in the McKim, Mead & White office where Guastavino vaulting was utilized: the Boston Public Library (1889), Gould Memorial Library (1895), the restoration of the Rotunda, University of Virginia (1898), and the Brooklyn Museum(1900-05).
8. See an illustration of Frank Gould's riding stable in Architectural Record, 12(June, 1902), 228.
9. The stable's ground story entrance arch and banded rustication can be compared with the ground stories of the two ranges of buildings which enclosed the Place Dauphine, although these arches housed shops. Although the arcades of the Place Royale are not rusticated, it should be noted that the arches there are high enough to accommodate carriages -- several streets enter the square through

them.

The upper stories of the Place Dauphine are of equal height, but in the Place Royale, as with Miss Gould's stable facade, the second story, or piano nobile, is higher than the third story. The dormers of the end pavilions at the tip of the Place Dauphine rise through the whole entablature as the dormer of Miss Gould's stable does. This is not the case in the Place Royale. The dormers are above the cornice.

10. Double, glazed doors are flanked by sidelights; a three-light transom is overhead.
11. Its outer bottom edge is chamfered except over the keystone where it is squared. The outer, upper edges are higher at its extreme ends. The balcony railing is wrought iron painted black; a central cartouche enclosing an anthemion is flanked by pierced balusters joined with concentric circles. The railing is the same height as the flanking limestone dado.
12. All of the windows are fitted with casements under transoms and have wood sash. The center windows on both stories are wider and have double sash casements; their transoms are four by four. The flanking windows have single sash casements; their transoms are each six panes. The longer second story casements are sixteen by sixteen panes in the center and the side, single sash casements are each twenty-four panes. The center third story window casements are eight by eight and the side single sash casements are each twelve panes.
13. Only the essentials -- architrave, frieze and their respective moldings -- span the building's width uninterrupted. The flat arch voussoirs of the third story flanking windows extend the height of the entablature frieze and carry the essential moldings across their surfaces. Only the center window has an articulated keystone. The cornice brackets are a hybrid of modillion and triglyph, and they flank convex rondels. The cornice returns and carries a copper cresting with antefixes.
14. Centered within the railing's design is an open cartouche containing a brass 'G' (Plate 3). The wrought iron is painted black. Like the balcony below, the lower edge of the dormer balconet is chamfered. The raised section on the right hand side of the balconet's upper edge is missing, apparently the facade's only physical loss.

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 former Helen Miller Gould Stable has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the former Helen Miller Gould Stable is an early work of the noted firm of York & Sawyer; that it is an eminently pure example of the late French Renaissance style and set an exceptionally high standard of carriage house design; that the facade presents the style's general characteristics, including symmetry, vertical correspondence, the combination of limestone and brick laid in Flemish bond with dark headers, aediculated dormer, the high hipped roof of slate and the tall flanking chimneys, while details culled from contemporary prototypes successfully evoke the architecture of the reign of Henri IV; and that this stable, built in 1902-03, the only one of the many lining this mews-like section of West 58th Street to survive unaltered and intact, adds dignity to the street with its distinguished facade design.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the former Helen Miller Gould Stable, 213 West 58th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1030, Lot 24, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark site.

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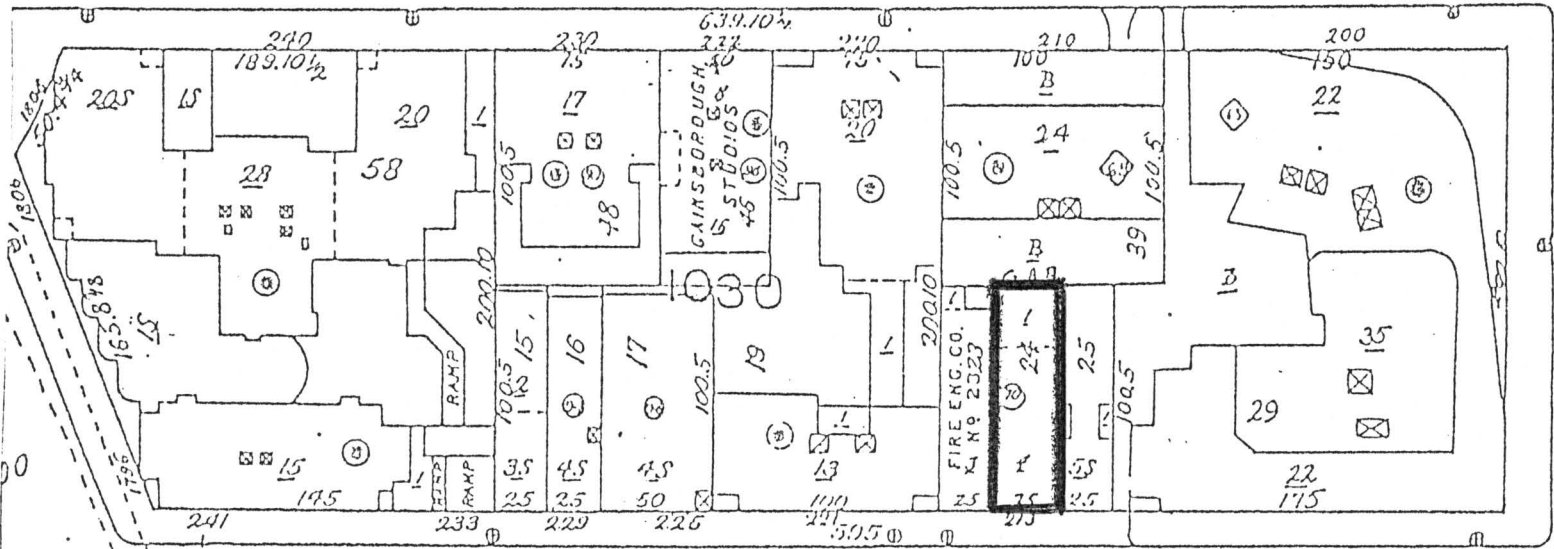
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PARK

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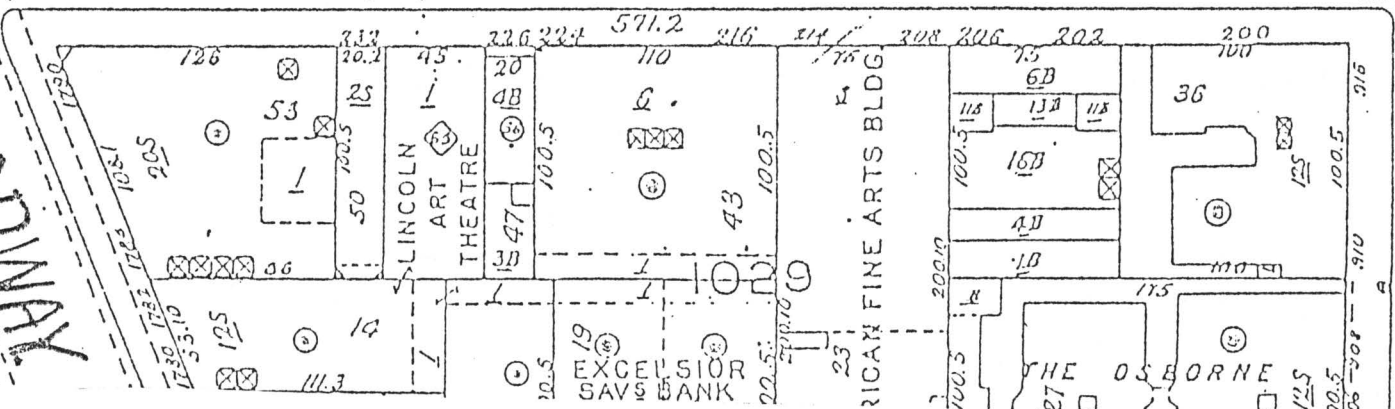
100 CENTRAL PARK

SOUTH



WEST 58th ST.

BROADWAY



7th AVE.

Former Helen Miller Gould Stable, 213 West 58th Street
Landmark Site



(Carl Forster)

Plate 1. Former HELEN MILLER GOULD STABLE, 213 West 58th Street,
1902-03. York & Sawyer.

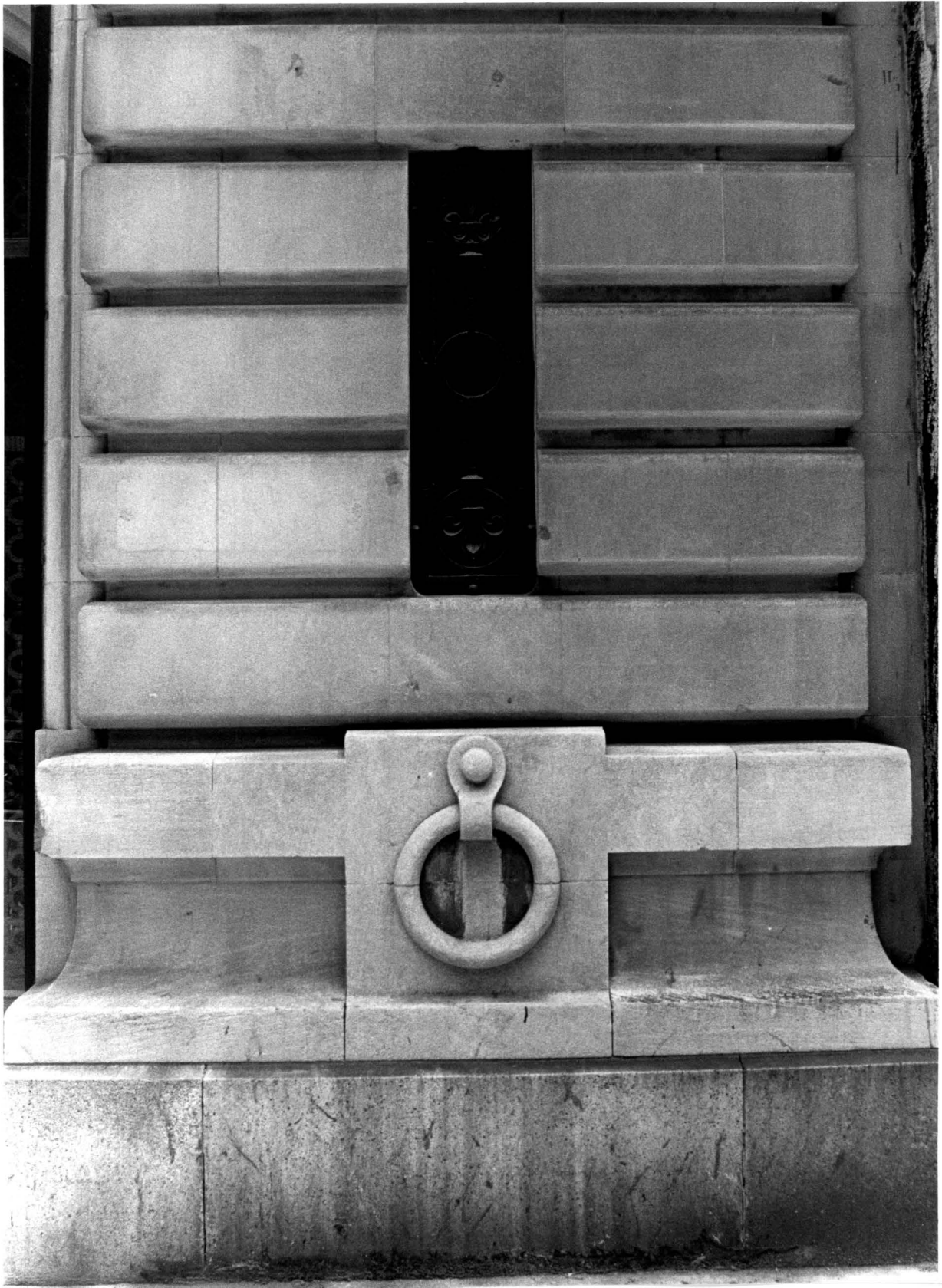


Plate 2. Detail, water table, 213 West 58th Street.

(Carl Forster)



(Carl Forster)

Plate 3. Detail, third and fourth stories, 213 West 58th Street.



Plate 4. Detail, ground story rustication, 213 West 58th Street.

(Carl Forster)



Plate 5. Detail, second, third and fourth stories,
213 West 58th Street.

(Carl Forster)



(Carl Forster)

Plate 6. Detail, dormer and hipped roof, 213 West 58th Street.



Plate 7. Full elevation, 213 West 58th Street.

(Carl Forster)