

**240 CENTRAL PARK SOUTH APARTMENTS**, 240 Central Park South (aka 232-246 Central Park South (West 59<sup>th</sup> Street), 233-241 West 58<sup>th</sup> Street, and 1792-1810 Broadway), Manhattan. Built 1939-40; [Albert] Mayer & [Julian H.] Whittlesey, architects; J.H. Taylor Construction Co., builders.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1030, Lot 58.

On April 30, 2002, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of 240 Central Park South Apartments and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Nineteen people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of Central Park South Associates (the property's owners), Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, City Councilmember Eva Moskowitz, New York Assemblyman Richard N. Gottfried, Municipal Art Society, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, Landmark West!, DOCOMOMO New York Tri-State, Modern Architecture Working Group, and architect-historian Robert A.M. Stern. One speaker opposed designation. In addition, the Commission received numerous letters and postcards in support of designation, including a resolution from Community Board 5 and letters from City Councilmember Christine C. Quinn, former Councilmember Ronnie M. Eldridge, Friends of Terra Cotta, National Society of Mural Painters, and Art Deco Society of New York.

### Summary

240 Central Park South Apartments, built in 1939-40 to the design of Mayer & Whittlesey, is a significant and innovative complex that represents the transition between 1930s Art Deco style apartment towers with courtyards (characteristic of Central Park West) and post-World War II "modernist" apartment houses. It is notable for its modernist near-lack of applied ornament and sophisticated planning. As stated by *Architectural Forum* in 1941, "the architectural character of these buildings stems directly from the plans... and the fenestration." Constructed by the Mayer family's J.H. Taylor Construction Co. for the J.H. Taylor Management Corp., it was one of Manhattan's largest luxury apartment projects of its day. The architects were particularly skillful in adapting their plan to a highly prominent and complex site, with frontages along Central Park South, Columbus Circle, Broadway and West 58<sup>th</sup> Street. The complex consists of a 20-story, C-shaped-in-plan building (with an 8-story tower), facing Central Park, connected by ground-story lobbies and rounded shopfronts (following the diagonal of Broadway) to a 15-story building to the south. Covering only about half of the lot, the buildings provided a maximum amount of light, air, quiet, and corner apartments, which featured cantilevered balconies and views (many of Central Park). Landscaped open space included the entrance court, central courtyard and adjacent shops' rooftops, and roof terraces atop both buildings. Clad in an orangish-colored brick, the buildings were detailed with broad steel-casement windows and the contrasting concrete of the balcony slabs. Amedee Ozenfant's mosaic "The Quiet City" decorates the front entrance, while rooftop vertical architectural elements enliven the skyline. 240 Central Park South Apartments was marketed with an explicit suburban appeal, and the slogan "Where the Park is Part of the Plan," at a time when Manhattan was losing population to the outer boroughs and suburbs. Lewis Mumford, in *The New Yorker* in 1940, praised its "ingenious" planning solution, while *Architectural Forum* called it "one of the best apartment buildings yet produced." Mayer & Whittlesey, founded in 1935 (Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass after 1945), was noted for planning and apartment housing, such as Manhattan House (1950-51, with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill).



Historic Photograph

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### The Mayer Family and J.H. Taylor Construction Co./J.H. Taylor Management Corp.<sup>1</sup>

By the late 1930s, the J.H. Taylor Construction Co. and J.H. Taylor Management Corp. had built, owned, and managed a number of large apartment buildings in New York City. Associated with these firms were members of the prominent German-Jewish Mayer family, who individually and collectively had a long involvement in New York real estate through their activities in architecture, engineering, construction, management, investment, and ownership through various corporate entities. Bernhard Mayer (1852-1929), son of Mayer and Fannie Mayer, was born in Altdorf, Germany, and immigrated to the United States in 1872. He became a principal in the real estate firm of [Lazarus] Weil & Mayer, with his brother-in-law. Mayer left an estate worth over \$2.5 million which, after charitable donations, was left to family members, principally his widow Sophia Bittenwieser Mayer (1860-1945) and their six children.

All three male Mayer siblings were active in real estate and construction, while two sisters also achieved prominence.<sup>2</sup> Joseph L.B. Mayer (1885-1939), a real estate agent specializing in Park Avenue properties, was an officer and director of the Gruenstein & Mayer Corp., and an officer of the corporations for 875, 1040, and 1069 Park Avenue and 205 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>3</sup> Charles Mayer (1888-1980), a graduate of Columbia University with a degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in engineering (1909), became chief engineer in the construction of apartment and office buildings through his J.H. Taylor Construction Co. (founded 1913),<sup>4</sup> as well as a consulting engineer on such projects as Lewisohn Stadium (1915, Arnold W. Brunner; demolished), City College. He also served as president of the J.H. Taylor Management Corp. (formed in 1931). Albert Mayer (1897-1981) received a degree in civil engineering from M.I.T. (1919), worked for Charles (1919-35) and was a principal partner in the J.H. Taylor Construction Co. He was one of the architects of the 240 Central Park South Apartments [see below]. Their sister, Fannie Mayer, married William Korn (1884-1972), who became president of the J.H. Taylor Management Corp. and J.H. Taylor Construction Co. Among the J.H. Taylor Construction Co.'s projects were the Jewish Hospital addition (1922-23), Brooklyn; 40 Central Park South Apartments (1941); Lebanon Hospital (1942), the Bronx; and the office building at 1407 Broadway (1950, Kahn & Jacobs).

Clara Woollie Mayer (1895-1988), a graduate of Barnard College (1915), did graduate work at Columbia University in 1915-19, and became a student at the New School for Social Research in 1919. She helped to organize a student committee in 1922 to raise funds to assist the school's then precarious financial situation. A

history of the New School states that she "recruited her mother and several brothers and sisters to the school's cause. Over the next fifty years only [director] Alvin Johnson played a more important part in the life of the New School."<sup>5</sup> Clara Mayer was appointed a trustee on the school's board of directors (1924-30), was secretary to the board (1931-46), assistant director of the New School (1931-36), associate director (1937-43), dean of the School of Philosophy and Liberal Arts (1943-60), vice president (1950-62), and dean of the New School (1960-62). The Mayer family contributed \$100,000 towards the new building for the New School (1929-31, Joseph Urban). Her brothers' J.H. Taylor Construction Co. was recruited to construct the building at low cost, and Charles and Albert have been credited with recommending Urban as architect.<sup>6</sup> The famous New School auditorium was originally dedicated to the memory of their father, Bernhard Mayer.<sup>7</sup> In 1956-59, the Mayer family contributed to the expansion of the New School, which was designed by Albert Mayer's firm.<sup>8</sup>

### Mayer & Whittlesey, Architects<sup>9</sup>

Albert Mayer, after working for his brother Charles in construction and engineering, became a registered architect and in 1935 established the firm of Mayer & [Julian H.] Whittlesey, which specialized in the design of apartment buildings. Mayer was well known as a planner and housing consultant in the United States and abroad from the 1930s on. He was a member of the Regional Planning Association of America (1930-33) which influenced the creation of the Greenbelt towns project, and was a founder, with Henry Wright and Lewis Mumford, of the Housing Study Guild (1933) which made recommendations on public housing and advocated large, planned projects, leading to the creation of the U.S. Housing Authority in 1937. Mayer received the apartment house award from the New York Chapter, American Institute of Architects (A.I.A) in 1941 for Thorneycroft Homes, Forest Hills, Queens, and participated in the design of the Ft. Greene Houses (1942-44, with Clarence Stein, Rosario Candela, Wallace K. Harrison, Ely Jacques Kahn, Andre Fouilhoux, etc.), Brooklyn, for the New York City Housing Authority. During World War II, Mayer served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the construction of airfields, and his meeting of Jawaharlal Nehru led to a number of commissions in India, including a pilot development project for rural villages (1947 on) and the original master plan for Chandigarh, India (1950, with Matthew Nowicki).<sup>10</sup> Mayer was an advocate for the rational planning of new towns, which included Kitimat, British Columbia (1951-56, with Clarence Stein). He retired from active architectural practice in 1961, but continued work as a housing consultant and as a professor, and was

author of *The Urgent Future* (1967), in which he discussed his planning philosophies.

Julian Hill Whittlesey (1905-1995), born in Greenwich, Connecticut, was educated in architecture and civil engineering at Yale University, and studied at the Fontainebleau School of Fine Arts, France, and the American School of Classical Studies, Athens. Like Mayer, he was interested in housing issues, and he worked as a consultant to the Resettlement Administration in the 1930s, as an advisor to the U.S. Public Housing Administration, and during World War II designed offices and housing for the military. Whittlesey participated in the design of the James Weldon Johnson Houses (1947-48, with Harry M. Prince and Robert J. Reiley), Park Avenue and East 112<sup>th</sup>-115<sup>th</sup> Streets, and the Colonial Park Houses (1951, with Prince and Reiley). He also served as a consultant to the Baltimore and Yonkers Housing Authorities. In the 1960s, he worked as an archaeologist.

Mayer & Whittlesey and its successor firms were responsible for the design of a number of notable New York City apartment houses. The innovative 240 Central Park South Apartments (1939-40), an early commission, was built by the J.H. Taylor Construction Co. for the J.H. Taylor Management Corp. It was followed by the 22-story 40 Central Park South Apartments (1941), built by J.H. Taylor Construction Co. for Mayer family relative L. Victor Weil. In 1945, Mayer & Whittlesey became Mayer, Whittlesey & [M. Milton] Glass. Glass (1906-1993), educated at City College, Columbia and New York Universities, and the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, worked as a draftsman in a number of architectural offices prior to joining Mayer & Whittlesey, where he was head draftsman in 1940-45. Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass designed the noted 20-story Manhattan House (1950-51, with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill), 200 East 66<sup>th</sup> Street, for the New York Life Insurance Co., which employed the innovations and amenities of 240 Central Park South Apartments on a full-block scale. William J. Conklin (b. 1923) joined Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass in 1951 and became associate partner in charge of design in 1958. The firm was also joined by James S. Rossant. Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass received the medal of honor for large-scale housing and city planning, and an apartment house award, from the New York Chapter, A.I.A. in 1952. The firm designed 220 Central Park South Apartments (1954); New School for Social Research additions (Kaplan and List Buildings)(1956-59, Conklin in charge of design), 66 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street; Butterfield House (1959-62, Conklin and Rossant in charge of design), 37 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street;<sup>11</sup> Painting Industry Welfare Building (1960, Conklin in charge of design), 45 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street, featuring a glass curtain wall overlaid with a bronze screen; Gala East Harlem Plaza (1960) at the Jefferson Houses, First Avenue and 112<sup>th</sup>-115<sup>th</sup> Streets; and the Premier (1960-63, Conklin in charge of design), 333 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street. Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass was dissolved in 1961.

The firm of Whittlesey & Conklin was formed in 1961 (Whittlesey, Conklin & Rossant after 1965); it developed the master plan for the new town of Reston, Virginia (1962-69). Conklin & Rossant, its successor firm, was established in 1967. Milton Glass began his own firm in 1961 that became Glass & [Elliott M.] Glass in 1966.

#### Columbus Circle and Central Park South<sup>12</sup>

Columbus Circle was created at junction of Broadway, Eighth Avenue/Central Park West and West 59<sup>th</sup> Street (Central Park South). In 1868-71, Broadway had been widened and planted north of 59<sup>th</sup> Street, becoming known as “the Boulevard,” and by 1870, land was acquired for grander southern corner entrances to Central Park (designed in 1858 by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux).<sup>13</sup> The Plaza was created at Fifth Avenue and “the Circle” was established at Eighth Avenue. Maps of Central Park from this period indicate that the Circle was intended to have a sculptural focus. The Ladies Pavilion (1871, Vaux & Mould) was originally located at the park’s southwest corner at the Circle. “Columbus Circle” came into being in 1892 when the Columbus monument (Gaetano Russo, sculptor) was installed. The Ladies Pavilion was moved into the park and the corner came to be dominated by the Maine Monument (1901-13, Attilio Piccirilli, sculptor; A. Van Buren Magonigle, architect).

Central Park South has sometimes been referred to as a “gold coast” of Manhattan due to its advantageous location, facing the south end of Central Park, and the presence of luxurious hotels and apartment houses. In the early 1870s, town houses and mansions for New York’s elite began to be constructed along Fifth Avenue and the adjacent blocks of the West 50s. Nearby West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, between Sixth Avenue and Broadway, has had a distinguished history as a center of the arts and music for over a century. Central Park South, first fully developed in the 1870s-80s, has from the beginning attracted a mix of hotels, residential structures, and institutions, as indicated on Robinson’s *Atlas of the City of New York* of 1885. Among the more notable were the Fifth Avenue Plaza Hotel (begun by Fife & Campbell; 1888-91, McKim, Mead & White), No. 2; the Hawthorne (1883, Hubert & Pirsson), No. 128; and Central Park Apartments (“Spanish Flats” or “the Navarro”)(1881-83, Hubert & Pirsson), a complex of eight buildings at Nos. 150-180 (all now demolished).

In 1885, a law was enacted to limit the height of all new residential construction in New York City to a height of 80 feet (six stories), but hotels and residential hotels were exempted because they were considered commercial properties. Central Park South thus continued to attract such structures. New buildings and institutions along the street at the turn of the century, some by prestigious architects, included the Plaza Hotel (1905-07, Henry J.

Hardenbergh), No. 2, one of the world's great luxury hotels; New York Athletic Club (1899, William A. Cable; demolished), No. 56; Deutscher Verein (German Club)(1889-91, McKim, Mead & White; demolished), No. 112; Catholic Club (1891-92, William Schickel & Co.; demolished), No. 120; and Gainsborough Studios (1907-08, Charles W. Buckham), No. 222, which provided studios and apartments for artists.<sup>14</sup>

During the period between the two world wars, many new hotels and apartments were constructed: No. 100 (1916-18, Schwartz & Gross); Plaza Hotel addition (1921, Warren & Wetmore); No. 126-130 (1924-25, Schwartz & Gross); the Navarro (1925, J.E.R. Carpenter), No. 112; New York Athletic Club (1927-29, York & Sawyer), No. 180; Barbizon Plaza (1928-30, Lawrence Emmons, with Murgatroyd & Ogden), No. 106; Hampshire House (1927-29; 1931-38, Caughey & Evans), No. 150; Essex House (1929-30, Frank Grad), No. 160-170; Hotel St. Moritz (1929-30, Emery Roth), No. 56; No. 226-230 (1937-38, J.M. Felson); 240 Central Park South Apartments (1939-40); No. 40 (1941); and No. 120 (1941, H.I. Feldman).

#### 240 Central Park South Apartments<sup>15</sup>

In May 1939, a nearly one-acre site at one of the most visible locations in Manhattan, the entire blockfront along Broadway and Columbus Circle between West 58<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> Streets (across from the southwest corner of Central Park), was purchased by 240 Central Park South, Inc., an entity of the J.H Taylor Management Corp. This site, once seventeen lots, had been assembled between 1881 and 1908 by George Ehret (1835-1927), a German-born brewer. An immigrant to the United States in 1857, Ehret had worked in the Roemelt & Co. (later Hupfel's) Brewery, becoming foreman, prior to establishing his own Hell Gate Brewery in 1867. His enormous profits, which were invested in real estate, led the *New York Times* to comment at his death that he "was said at one time to be the largest holder of real estate in New York City" after the Estate of John Jacob Astor.<sup>16</sup> This property, one of only two vacant blockfronts along Broadway between Times Square and Columbus Circle,<sup>17</sup> was transferred to the George Ehret Columbus Circle Corp. in April 1927. Apparently initially intended for a roadhouse or hotel,<sup>18</sup> it was developed with a large U-shaped, two-story Mission Revival style building that was used for used for automobile-related businesses (with large advertising signs on top).<sup>19</sup> The building that had formerly housed Fire Engine Co. No. 23 (by 1885), 233 West 58<sup>th</sup> Street, was next-door and also part of the assembled site.

Mayer & Whittlesey filed plans for an apartment building, expected to cost \$1.6 million, in July 1939. According to the *Real Estate Record & Guide*, 240 Central Park South Apartments was intended as "a permanent headliner of the J.H Taylor Management Corporation's service, and not as a speculative venture."<sup>20</sup> Construction began in September and was completed, in

just over a year, in September 1940. The final cost was \$4.5 million.<sup>21</sup> As built, the project, called by the *New York Herald Tribune* "the largest [apartment house] now in construction in Manhattan,"<sup>22</sup> was actually two buildings, joined at the ground story, that overlooked a central landscaped courtyard and covered only about half the site. The *Real Estate Record* commented that "this is probably the lowest land coverage in the city for an apartment project of this size. By sacrificing ground coverage, the builders have been able to incorporate a maximum number of corner suites."<sup>23</sup> The northern building facing Central Park is twenty stories in height, with an eight-story (plus tank house) tower, and is roughly C-shaped in plan around an entrance court. The southern building is fifteen stories. The architects were particularly skillful in adapting their plan to the highly prominent and complex site, and incorporated shops along Columbus Circle/Broadway into the project.

The architects said of the design process, "We had what amounted to a design board consisting of the architects, the owner, operating manager, the rental agent and the builder, together with such engineers as might have to be called in from time to time,"<sup>24</sup> whose viewpoints and expertise were merged into "agreed decisions" which aimed to take into account factors of economy, progressive planning, and civic-minded architecture. After several schemes were proposed, the two-building solution was adopted and the building heights determined in large part due to elevator requirements. The Multiple Dwelling Law of 1929 had permitted the mechanical venting of public spaces, bathrooms, and kitchens in apartment buildings, resulting in the creation of a new apartment house type in Manhattan that combined the planning aspects of earlier mid-rise courtyard apartment buildings with tall towers. Examples of this type are the San Remo (1929-30, Emery Roth), the Majestic (1930-31, Irwin S. Chanin), and the Century (1931, Chanin), at 145-146, 115, and 25 Central Park West,<sup>25</sup> and River House (1931-32, Bottomley, Wagner & White), 435 East 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. Architect-historian Robert A.M. Stern has stated that "after the collapse of the real-estate market in the Depression, the type was never again seriously pursued, except at 240 Central Park South, which despite the limitations of its courtyard remains a paradigm of the contextually responsible high-rise apartment in Manhattan."<sup>26</sup> The buildings, clad in an orangish-colored brick, were constructed with steel-skeleton framing (produced by the Bethlehem Steel Corp.) set on reinforced concrete footings, with concrete-slab floors set between fireproofed steel beams. The open space of the complex, called by *Buildings & Building Management* "one of the most ingenious landscaping programs ever seen in New York,"<sup>27</sup> was done under the supervision of landscape architects Cynthia Wiley and Eleanor Robertson Paepcke.<sup>28</sup> Included in the overall landscaped open space

scheme were the northern entrance court; off-street loading area and planting bed along 58<sup>th</sup> Street; gardens on the ground-story shops' roofs and central court; a ground-floor conservatory, with a curved glass wall, connecting the lobbies of the two buildings and overlooking the interior gardens; a roof garden on the purposely-lower southern building; and roof terraces on the 20<sup>th</sup> story of the northern building.

In terms of exterior architectural expression, 240 Central Park South Apartments represents a transition between the usage of the Art Deco, Art Moderne, and Modern Classical styles for New York apartments houses throughout the 1930s and post-World War II "modernism." According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, "the architects conceived the idea while studying architecture in Stockholm, Amsterdam, and Vienna."<sup>29</sup> Albert Mayer was quoted on the project's modernist and functionalist aspects:

*This building will introduce the philosophy of modern architecture, allowing the purpose of the structure and its location to dictate its style. New York has seen great strides in the design of business buildings, where such requirements as entire floors of space have dictated broad bands of windows, but until now little progress has been made in letting the comforts and requirements of the private home guide us in planning large apartment buildings.*<sup>30</sup>

*Architectural Forum* further stated on its modernism that

*The architectural character of these buildings stems directly from the plans as developed on different levels, and the fenestration. There is no applied "architecture." The exterior walls are flush, of a brick somewhat darker than the white concrete balcony slabs, whose sharp alternation of light and shadow constitutes the main decorative element of the exterior.*<sup>31</sup>

While there had been examples of fully modernist apartment buildings in Manhattan, such as the Beaux-Arts Apartments (1929-30, Kenneth M. Murchison and Raymond Hood), 307 and 310 East 44<sup>th</sup> Street, and Rockefeller Apartments (1935-37, Harrison & Fouilhoux), 17 West 54<sup>th</sup> Street and 24 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street,<sup>32</sup> the modernist architectural approach was more typically seen during this period in public housing projects, garden apartments, and larger planned developments throughout the city.<sup>33</sup> 240 Central Park South Apartments is an unusual and innovative highrise luxury apartment complex in Manhattan, notable for its architecture, planning, and response to its urban site.

The retail shops along the Columbus Circle/Broadway side of the complex include rounded storefronts staggered along the diagonal property line, adding a nearly Art Moderne style touch to the complex. According to Mayer "in this manner a new maximum in display value will be achieved through architectural beauty instead of at the

expense of it. Each shop will enjoy many of the advantages of a corner location."<sup>34</sup> The main entrance court and Central Park South facade were embellished by a number of features: a glass-fronted lobby and entrance; a blue-grey extruded terra-cotta-block wall along the western side of the court; and the work of "collaborating artists," according to *Architectural Forum*,<sup>35</sup> apparently a reference to both the abstract mosaic mural entitled "The Quiet City" by Amedee Ozenfant<sup>36</sup> and ceramic plaques (no longer extant) on the Central Park South restaurant facade to the east of the court. An orange extruded terra-cotta-block entrance enframement and green tile inset planter decorate the 58<sup>th</sup> Street facade of the southern building. Rooftop vertical architectural elements, such as water tower enclosure, chimneys, and wing walls, enliven the skyline.

240 Central Park South Apartments was planned with 326 apartments, ranging in size from one to four rooms. A large number of the apartments face Central Park, while the rest also have views due to the overall layout of the complex. The amenities offered were a mixture of those found in a traditional apartment house with those of an apartment hotel. A restaurant was located on the ground floor facing onto the entrance court. There was interior lobby access to the shops. An off-street loading area along 58<sup>th</sup> Street, partially covered by a roof, allowed for the transfer of goods by a hand truck ramp leading directly into the basement. There were four passenger and two service elevators. Cantilevered balconies (averaging eight feet square) were provided for about 100 apartments above the seventh story facing Central Park and above the tenth or twelfth story in the southern sections of the project. Cantilevered corner windows and wide steel casement windows (in many locations the width of the room) allowed for a maximum of light and air. Most apartments above the sixth story had wood-burning fireplaces. Maid service was available and servants' lavatories and separate service halls were located on each floor; workrooms, storage rooms, and laundry facilities were provided in the basement. A solarium/recreation room was located on the 20<sup>th</sup> story of the northern building. Construction included special sound insulation (including elevators) and insulation against heat from boilers, etc. An independent generating plant provided power for the complex, while a hot water heating system was "the first plant of this type ever introduced in a tower apartment house."<sup>37</sup>

The marketing appeal of 240 Central Park South Apartments was explicitly suburban. *Buildings & Building Management* pointed out that the J.H. Taylor Management Corp. was well aware that Manhattan had lost a population of 650,000 over the preceding two-and-a-half decades to the outer boroughs and suburbs.<sup>38</sup> In its prospectus and advertising, J.H. Taylor used the slogan "Where the Park is Part of the Plan" in recognition of its site facing Central Park, the project's own landscaped

open space, and the prospective residents' "wide-spread enthusiasm for out-of-doors life, fresh air, sunshine and vistas of green lawns and trees."<sup>39</sup> *Architectural Forum* commented that

*The architects... had formulated certain ideas – and actual plans – as to how people might live and would want to live, if they preferred to live in the inner city, rather than in the suburbs, or if they could be convinced that the city had something less stony and court-yardy to offer than the inner cores of our cities have generally known. Their ideas... included the romantic vistas that our cities afford, but usually give only to the top few floors of their tallest buildings. They included a pattern of gardens, of open-air dining, of solariums, not only for the few fantastically priced pent-houses and terraces, but for all who decided to live in their buildings. And also an intimation of these, a sense of greenery and openness and refreshment even to passers-by.*<sup>40</sup>

A special mail campaign and newspaper advertisements were particularly successful in attracting tenants. The building was over twenty-five percent rented by May 1940, and was seventy percent rented by August. Starting rents were about \$550 a room.

#### Critical Response

240 Central Park South Apartments, though not widely noted in the architectural press at the time of its construction (possibly due to the timing between the end of the Depression and World War II), was featured in three notable publications. Lewis Mumford, in *The New Yorker* in December 1940, opined that

*The new apartment house... shows that in single projects... the architectural imagination has not gone stale. This one seems to me, at least in form, the finest in its class that has been put up since the Rockefeller apartments, and its interior plan is, I think, superior to theirs. ... The architects... had a very teasing problem. The plot is irregular... Their solution was an ingenious one, which gives the living quarters of their buildings the maximum possible light, air, and quiet. ... the ingenuity of the solution lies in the fact that only the western flanks of these two buildings abut on noisy, raucous Broadway.*<sup>41</sup>

Mumford additionally admired the "very pleasant orangey brick" of the buildings, the breadth of the apartment windows, the extensive use of balconies, the openness of the glass-fronted main entrance, and the Broadway shopfronts, and wrote that "in the difficult matter of terminating a high building, the architects again, by the simplest means, have scored a real success."<sup>42</sup> The apartment complex was included in the Museum of Modern Art's *Guide to Modern Architecture* of 1940

which called it "a conscientious restudying of the apartment house problem, with particular attention to light, air, and view."<sup>43</sup> It was also praised in May 1941 in *Architectural Forum*:

*It shows a host of improvements which taken together add up to one of the best apartment buildings yet produced. ... the plan... shows an admirably worked out scheme for a difficult site. The solution is notable for the skill with which a maximum number of rooms have been given a view of the park, and for the flexibility with which various types of living units have been fitted into a standardized structural layout.*<sup>44</sup>

The complex has been singled out in more recent criticism. Architectural critic Paul Goldberger in the *New York Times* in 1977 listed the building among "The City's Top 10 [Luxury] Apartment Buildings," stating that *this often-overlooked building at the edge of Columbus Circle contains not only good apartments, but also some splendid urban lessons. ... The apartment house is thoughtful, intelligent, and unpretentious throughout – one of the last pieces of luxury housing in New York about which that can be said.*<sup>45</sup>

Goldberger further lauded the building in *The City Observed: New York* (1979):

*[Central Park South's] last building is one of its very finest, No. 240... Here, urbanistic concerns were paramount... a complex form consisting of a pair of towers atop a zigzag, garden-topped base was used. The base brings variety to storefronts and rhythm to the building's Columbus Circle facade; the overall massing emphasizes park views and brings individuality to apartment layouts. It is a remarkably sophisticated design, substantially ahead of its time in its knowing response to a difficult urban site.*<sup>46</sup>

Robert A.M. Stern wrote in an article in 1980 that *240 Central Park South comes at the point when the transition between traditional and modernist styles strongly affected American practice and produced a number of interesting buildings which, because of the ideological positions the shift forced architects and critics alike to take, have been largely overlooked.*<sup>47</sup>

Stern later observed in *New York 1930* (1987) that *It was not its bland facades that lent 240 Central Park South distinction but rather the shaping of the two towers, particularly the northern one, in response to the complex perimeter of the site. Aspects of the courtyard apartment building were combined with those of the skyscraper apartment building to establish both a horizontal and vertical reflection of the city's composition. Terraces began only above the*

*level of the trees in Central Park (high enough to be free of the fumes of the street); roofs were set back not only to conform to zoning requirements but also in consideration of solar orientation and views; and chimneys and mechanical equipment combined with the penthouse suites to produce a lively skyline. At the street level the building respected the varied nature of its locale: a deep, planted courtyard on Central Park South created an elegant pocket of shade, while a vigorous one-story commercial strip along Broadway used curved corners to define the diagonal of the street. The building succeeded... as an exemplar of humane values applied to the problem of high-density city living and as a finely tuned instrument of urbanism.*<sup>48</sup>

#### Later History of 240 Central Park South<sup>49</sup>

240 Central Park South, Inc., original owner of the property, sold it in May 1976 to Central Park South Associates, an entity of Sarah Korein, a New York real estate mogul known for choice Manhattan properties. Sarah Rabinowitz (c. 1905-1998), born in Germany and raised in Palestine, married Isidor Korein, a Hungarian engineer, and immigrated to New York City in 1923. After the purchase of two apartment buildings in Brooklyn in 1931 and 1941, she entered the Manhattan real estate market after the war with the purchase of 715 Park Avenue. She later bought and sold the Osborne Apartments, the Beresford, Croyden Hotel, Fifth Avenue Hotel, and Schwab House Apartments, and owned the land and/or buildings at Lever House, Equitable Building, 1 Penn Plaza, Delmonico Hotel, Swiss Center, and 220 and 240 Central Park South Apartments.

Among the building's many residents over the years have been Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1941-), later author of *The Little Prince* (1943); actress Sylvia Miles (since 1968); Albert Mayer (c. 1975 to his death in 1981); Clara Mayer (c. 1975-86); and the fictive Lois Lane in the movie *Superman* (1978). Directories list an office of the J.H. Taylor Management Corp. here from 1940 to the 1980s.

#### Description<sup>50</sup>

240 Central Park South Apartments consists of two buildings, connected at the ground story, overlooking a central landscaped courtyard. The northern building along Central Park South is roughly C-shaped in plan around a planted entrance court and is twenty stories in height with an eight-story (plus tank house) tower. The southern building along West 58<sup>th</sup> Street is fifteen stories. Both buildings are steel-skeleton-framed and faced in orangish Belden Stark brick, with slate sills and concrete cantilevered balconies with original metal railings. A restaurant has been located in the ground-story space east of the entrance court. Retail shops are located on the west

side of the entrance court and on the Columbus Circle/Broadway side of the buildings, some with rounded storefronts staggered along the diagonal of the property line. The shops' roofs comprise part of the central courtyard and entrance court. The majority of the original Fenwrought steel casement windows (cantilevered at the corners) survive, mainly in two configurations: 1) central fixed single pane, flanked by casements with upper and lower fixed panes 2) casements with upper and lower fixed panes. Some windows have been replaced. There are also some smaller one- and two-pane windows. Brick replacement, repair, and coating in recent years has resulted in a variety of brick colors.

**Central Park South Building** The northern building of the complex is twenty stories in height, with an eight-story (plus tank house) tower, and is roughly C-shaped in plan around an entrance court [see below], with a southern wing. A restaurant has been located in the ground-story space east of the entrance court. Historic brick window enframements (with slightly recessed brick) survive, though original ceramic decorative plaques have been removed from the piers. There were originally four bays of windows along Central Park South (with tripartite windows with tripartite transoms, except that at the eastern end, which was bipartite); the corner by the entrance court was originally a glass-fronted inset restaurant entrance with a terra-cotta corner column supporting a slightly projecting shelf canopy. There are currently four large non-historic, single-pane windows with metal surrounds set within the historic enframements and altered former restaurant entrance corner; an entrance with non-historic revolving door and metal-and-glass door was inserted in the second bay from the eastern end (it has a non-historic canopy). The windows have non-historic awnings. The retail shops located on the west side of the building begin at the west side of the entrance court [see below].

There is brick patterning on the lower portions (second to fourth stories) of the northern facades of the two wings. An abstract mosaic mural ("The Quiet City," by Amedee Ozenfant) is located over the entrance, in two panels above and below the third story. Cantilevered balconies are placed above the seventh story on corners facing Central Park, and above the twelfth story on corners of the southern facade. There are corner windows where there are not balconies, except on the southern wing. The eastern wall of the building is set back from the side lot line above the ground story (which is surmounted by a terrace with its original metal railing); the wall is pierced by windows.

The 20<sup>th</sup> story has penthouses, the original solarium/recreation room, and three roof terraces (including one to the south), the eastern one having a pergola. The tower (21<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> stories plus tank house) has balconies on the 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> stories of the northern

facade; corner terraces on the 27<sup>th</sup> story of the northern facade; and tank house surmounted by a roofed terrace (now enclosed). The northern facade of the tank house portion of the tower has windows divided by pilasters clad in blue-gray extruded terra-cotta blocks (the lower portion of the east pilaster has been replaced by brick). Roofs have chimneys, wing walls, bulkheads, and stairs.

**Entrance Court** The entrance court has a concrete sidewalk leading to the entrance with low retaining walls with aggregate concrete coping, one stone-clad entrance post, tile and flagstone paving to the east with a tree pit and small planting beds, and a planting bed to the west. The original iron railing (lined on the interior with a planting strip) borders the court along the Central Park South sidewalk and is set on a base (now clad in flagstone); the railing originally ended at the entrance area leading to the restaurant, but now extends to the east. A long non-historic entrance canopy extending to the Central Park South sidewalk and non-historic lamp standards have been placed in the court.

The original curved one-story brick-clad entrance pavilion has large fixed panes with transoms and an inset entrance with non-historic double aluminum and glass doors, surmounted by a projecting roof that extends to the east as a canopy, which is supported by a pole. The west wall of the entrance court is clad in blue-gray extruded terra-cotta blocks (by Atlantic Terra Cotta Co.); this wall was later pierced by two windows. This wall enclosed a one-story shop to the west; the shop is surmounted by a terrace that is bordered on the east and north by the original metal railing. The east wall of the court currently has three non-historic single-pane windows with awnings and an historic three-pane window with tripartite transom at the southeast corner of the court.

**Shopfronts: Central Park South and Columbus Circle/Broadway** Retail shops are located on the western side of the complex, beginning at the corner of Central Park South and continuing along the Columbus Circle/Broadway side of the buildings. Four one-story bays have rounded storefronts staggered along the diagonal of the property line. All of the shopfronts originally had a continuous black signband above a continuous metal band above black-painted glass signbands in the transoms of the shopfronts. The shops' roofs comprised part of the landscaped central courtyard. From north to south:

1) The shop on the west side of the entrance court was originally entered through the lobby interior. It was later combined with two shops to the west. The shop at the corner of Central Park South and Columbus Circle has a recessed inset corner entrance (with the building cantilevered over it). Recent shopfront alterations include new brick facing and (in bays east to west on Central Park South): a louver and a metal door with parged transom area; two double-pane windows with anodized aluminum framing; and two triple-pane windows with anodized

aluminum framing. The corner entrance has anodized aluminum and glass double doors with a transom and sidelights. The recent brick facing continues on the staggered Columbus Circle/Broadway side, which has multi-pane windows with anodized aluminum framing. A non-historic awning extends around the corner.

2) The shop in the center of the Central Park South building has an inset entrance with a painted metal and glass door and transom, flanked on the north by a glass corner shopfront window and on the south by a projecting glass shopfront window with painted metal framing (both without transoms) set above a brick-and-glassblock bulkhead, and a black glass signband.

3) The shop in the south end of the Central Park South building has an inset entrance with an aluminum and glass door and transom, flanked by projecting glass shopfronts with aluminum framing (without transoms) set above a granite bulkhead. It has a non-historic awning.

4) The rounded shopfront has metal window framing (in its original configuration but without a transom) set above its historic brick bulkhead (now painted) with its original openings (formerly windows, now vents), and a non-historic aluminum door and awning. The shopfront originally had a metal railing above slate coping; there is currently a metal-spike security fence.

5) The rounded shopfront has later metal window framing (without a transom) set above its historic brick bulkhead with original openings (formerly windows, now vents; the southern one is covered), and a non-historic aluminum and glass door, awning, and rolldown gates. The shopfront originally had a metal railing above slate coping; there is currently a metal-spike security fence.

6) The two northern bays of the southernmost shop are rounded shopfronts with original metal window framing with transoms set above their historic brick bulkheads with original openings (formerly windows, now vents and covered by signs). The portion of the shop in the 58<sup>th</sup> Street building has an angled shopfront with metal framing in its original configuration with transoms set above its historic brick bulkhead with signs placed in original window openings, and has anodized aluminum and glass entrance doors and transom. The southern piers are covered with painted sheet metal. The rounded bays originally had a metal railing above slate coping; there is currently a metal-spike security fence. The entire shopfront has a continuous non-historic awning.

**West 58<sup>th</sup> Street Building** The southern building of the complex is fifteen stories in height and is a slightly irregular slab in form. The lobby entrance on 58<sup>th</sup> Street has an enframing of orange extruded terra-cotta blocks (by the Atlantic Terra Cotta Co.) (a portion to the east of the entrance has been pierced by an air conditioner, with a brick surround); original signage "235 W 58" and "240 CPS"; and non-historic anodized aluminum and glass doors and box awning. To the west of the lobby entrance is an original glazed green tile inset planter; a doctors'



sign plaque above the planter (in its historic location); and a row of small single-pane windows. To the east of the lobby entrance, multi-pane windows flank an inset office entrance, with a wood and glass door, brick steps, and non-historic iron gate. The ground story is capped by brick patterning.

Cantilevered balconies are placed above the tenth story. There are corner windows where there are not balconies. The roof has a garden, a pergola at the west end, and bulkheads.

**Central Courtyard** The central courtyard consists of the area between the Central Park South and 58<sup>th</sup> Street buildings, as well as the roofs of the one-story shops along Columbus Circle/Broadway. Atop the shops there were originally three raised planting beds, with brick retaining walls. The curved glass wall of the ground-story conservatory (connecting the lobbies of the two buildings) overlooks the courtyard on the west side. The eastern portion of the courtyard is divided by the submerged (zigzag in plan) hand truck ramp (bordered by brick walls) leading to the basement from the off-street loading area on 58<sup>th</sup> Street. To the east of the ramp is a planting bed, and to the west was originally a roughly T-shaped planting bed and two small circular planting beds, both raised with brick retaining walls. Paths had gravel paving. Portions of the original landscaping scheme survive.

**58<sup>th</sup> Street Off-Street Loading Area, Service Entrance, and Planting Bed** Off of 58<sup>th</sup> Street are a number of original features: a loading area for two trucks, paved with concrete and partially covered by a canopy roof enclosed

on the north by a brick wall with metal gates; a brick post at the east end of the loading area at the sidewalk; a service entrance sidewalk with two brick entrance posts of different heights at the street end; and an L-shaped raised planting bed bordered by a brick retaining wall. There was originally a planting strip between the retaining wall and the street sidewalk. Original sidewalk and loading area gates have been removed. This entire area is currently enclosed by non-historic rolldown gates and chainlink fencing; there is also chainlink fencing along the east side of the service entrance sidewalk and above the loading area canopy roof.

Report prepared by  
JAY SHOCKLEY  
Research Department

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank Elliott M. Glass (Glass & Glass, architects) for providing access to floorplan blueprints of 240 Central Park South Apartments, copies of historic photographs, and information on the firm of Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass.

## NOTES

1. “[Bernhard] Mayer Left Gifts to Eight Charities,” *New York Times (NYT)*, Aug. 21, 1929, 10; “Bernhard Mayer Left Estate of \$2,150,640,” *NYT*, May 26, 1932, 52; Jos. Mayer obit., *NYT*, Dec. 5, 1939, 27; Korn obit., *NYT*, Dec. 19, 1972, 46; Chas. Mayer obit., *NYT*, Dec. 15, 1980, D17; Peter M. Rutkoff and William B. Scott, *New School: A History of The New School for Social Research* (N.Y.: Free Pr., 1986); Clara Mayer obit., *NYT*, July 19, 1988, B8; “Clara W. Mayer,” *Who’s Who of American Women 1* (Chicago: Marquis-Who’s Who, 1958), 834, and *Who’s Who in World Jewry* (N.Y.: Pitman Publ. Corp., Inc., 1972), 602; Clara Mayer, *The Manmade Wilderness* (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1964), 167; LPC, *East 17<sup>th</sup> Street/Irving Place Historic District Designation Report (LP-1976)* (N.Y.: City of New York, 1998), prepared by Jay Shockley and Gale Harris; Benjamin J. Buttenwieser, *Buttenwieser Family Tree* (1975), 5-7.
2. Theresa Mayer Durlach (b. 1890), received a PhD. Degree in anthropology (1923) from Barnard College and was active in the suffragette movement. She worked for peace during World War I, serving as treasurer of the New York chapter of Jane Addam’s World Peace League. She founded her own organization, World Peaceways, in the 1930s. She married tobacco jobber Milton S. Durlach in 1922. “War Foe Seeks to Put Peace Tract on Every American Breakfast Tray [Theresa M. Durlach],” *NYT*, Oct. 24, 1937, VI, 7.
3. 875 Park Avenue (1911-12, George and Edward Blum) is located within the Upper East Side Historic District. 1040 Park Avenue (1924, Delano & Aldrich, with [M.W. Hopkins]) was built by the J.H. Taylor Construction Co. 1069-1075 Park Avenue (1921-22) was designed by George and Edward Blum.

4. Andrew C. Mayer, Charles Mayer's son, believes that the firm was named for a former boss of his father's. Telephone conversation, April 2002.
5. Rutkoff and Scott, 34.
6. *Ibid.*, 46.
7. Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie H. Bletter, *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York* (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1975), fig. 51D. The New School, 66 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, is located within the Greenwich Village Historic District. It is also a designated Interior Landmark.
8. The Mayer family home after 1895 was at 41 East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street (1881-82, Robert B. Lynd); the house was owned by Clara Mayer until 1975. It is located within the Upper East Side Historic District. Charles Mayer's daughter, Berna Osnos, is president of the 1804 Washington Avenue Corp. which owns all ten properties in the East 17<sup>th</sup> Street/Irving Place Historic District.
9. "Albert Mayer," *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* 3 (N.Y.: Free Pr., 1982), 129-130, and *Who Was Who in America* 8 (Chicago: Marquis Who's Who, Inc., 1985), 266; Mayer obit., *NYT*, Oct. 16, 1981, B6; Martin Filler, "An Architect With Quality: Albert Mayer 1897-1981," *Skyline* (Dec. 1981), 9; Whittlesey obit., *NYT*, May 23, 1995, B11; *American Architects Directory* (N.Y.: R.R. Bowker, 1962); Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1960* (N.Y.: Monacelli Pr., 1995); "Apartment House Design Awards Given to New York Architects," *Real Estate Record & Guide (REG)*, June 7, 1941, 15; "22-Story House Facing Central Park" [40 Central Park South], *NYT*, July 13, 1941, XI, 2; N.Y. Life Insurance Co., "Manhattan House" prospectus (c. 1951), Avery Library, Columbia University; "New Face on 14<sup>th</sup> Street" [Painting Industry Welfare Building], *Progressive Architecture* (Dec. 1961), 145.
10. Le Corbusier received the commission after Nowicki's death in 1950 and Mayer's withdrawal from the project.
11. The Kaplan and List Buildings and southern section of Butterfield House are located within the Greenwich Village Historic District.
12. Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1880* (N.Y.: Monacelli Pr., 1999); E. Robinson, *Atlas of the City of New York* (1885); G.W. Bromley & Co., *Atlas of the City of New York* (1899) and *Manhattan Land Book* (1934); NYC, Dept. of Buildings, Manhattan, Plans, Permits and Dockets; Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930* (N.Y.: Rizzoli, 1987).
13. Central Park is a designated New York City Scenic Landmark.
14. The Plaza Hotel and Gainsborough Studios are designated New York City Landmarks.
15. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; Ehret obit., *NYT*, Jan. 21, 1927, 15; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (NB 143-1939); 240 Central Park South floorplan blueprints, courtesy of Elliott M. Glass; "Projected Buildings," *REG*, July 15, 1939, 22; J.H. Taylor Management Corp., "240 Central Park South: 'Where the Park is Part of the Plan'" prospectus (c. 1940); 240 Central Park South advertisement, *NYT*, June 9, 1940, real est. sect., 9; "Towering Apartment Now Rising on Interesting Manhattan Corner: House of Wings Rising Opposite Central Park S.," *New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 21, 1940, IV, 1; "Skyscraper Apartment Designed to Capitalize View of Central Park," *REG*, Jan. 27, 1940, 4; "Management Experience Dictates Plans," *REG*, May 11, 1940, 3-4; "240 Central Park South," *REG*, Aug. 17, 1940, 4; "Planned for its Site," *Buildings & Building Management* (Aug. 1940), 34-37; Lewis Mumford, "The Sky Line... Home on the Park," *The New Yorker*, Dec. 21, 1940, 62-63; "240 Central Park South, New York City," *Architectural Forum* (May 1941), 311-319; *New York 1930*.
16. Ehret obit.
17. "Commercial Growth of Columbus Circle," *NYT*, Apr. 10, 1927, XI, 2.
18. *New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 21, 1940.
19. Columbus Circle was located amidst Automobile Row, which extended from the West 40s to the West 60s along Broadway in the 1910s-20s.
20. "Management Experience..." 3. Joseph Mayer was president of 240 Central Park South, Inc. (until his death in December 1939), and William Korn was later president.

21. Christopher Gray, "A Model of High-Density Residential Development," *NYT*, Feb. 9, 1997, IX, 4.
22. "Towering Apartment..."
23. "Management Experience...", 3.
24. *Architectural Forum*, 313.
25. The San Remo, Majestic, and Century are designated New York City Landmarks.
26. Robert A.M. Stern, "With Rhetoric: The New York Apartment House," *VIA: Culture and the Social Vision* (Univ. Of Pa., 1980), 101.
27. "Planned for...", 34.
28. *Ibid.*, 37.
29. "Towering Apartment..."
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Architectural Forum*, 316.
32. The Beaux-Arts and Rockefeller Apartments are designated New York City Landmarks.
33. Examples include garden apartments by Andrew J. Thomas in Jackson Heights, Queens; Amalgamated Houses (1930, Springsteen & Goldhammer), 504-520 Grand Street; Hillside Homes (1932-35, Clarence Stein), the Bronx; Knickerbocker Village (1934, John S. Van Wart and Frederick L. Ackerman), Lower East Side; Williamsburg Houses (1934-38, Richmond H. Shreve and William Lescaze), Brooklyn; Castle Village (1938, George F. Pelham, Jr.), West 181<sup>st</sup> Street and Northern Avenue; and Parkchester (1938-42, R.H. Shreve), the Bronx.
34. "Towering Apartment..."
35. *Architectural Forum*, 312.
36. Amedee Julien Ozenfant (1886-1966), born in San Quentin, France, studied painting and architecture in Paris (1906-13). Working as a painter, he also produced the avant-garde review *l'Elan* (1915-17). In 1918, with Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), Ozenfant issued an artistic manifesto on "Purism," an attempt to purify geometric language by the use of common machine-made objects. The *New York Times* observed that the influence of Purism "was felt more deeply in industrial design and in architecture, particularly in the building of Le Corbusier, than in painting." Ozenfant and Le Corbusier (with poet Paul Derme) edited the journal *l'Esprit Nouveau* (1919-25), but a dispute ended their collaboration in 1924. Le Corbusier had designed Ozenfant's atelier in Paris in 1922. Ozenfant came to New York in 1925 and founded an art school, but returned to France. He taught at the Modern Academy (1925-30) and the Ozenfant Academy (1931-35), Paris, and the French Institute (1936-38), London. He moved to New York City in 1938, was a lecturer at the New School for Social Research and Yale University (1938-41), Cooper Union (1939-40), University of Michigan (1940), and Harvard University (1941). After 1939, he was president of the Ozenfant School of Fine Arts in New York. Ozenfant was naturalized in 1944, and remained in New York until 1955. "Amedee-Julien Ozenfant," *Who Was Who in America* 4 (Chicago: Marquis-Who's Who, Inc., 1968), 727; Ozenfant obit., *NYT*, May 5, 1966, 47; Deborah Gans, *The Le Corbusier Guide* (Princeton: Princeton Archl. Pr., 1987).
37. "Management Experience...", 3.
38. "Planned for...", 34.
39. J.H. Taylor.
40. *Architectural Forum*, 313.
41. Mumford.
42. *Ibid.*
43. John McAndrew, edit., *Guide to Modern Architecture: Northeast States* (N.Y.: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), 80.

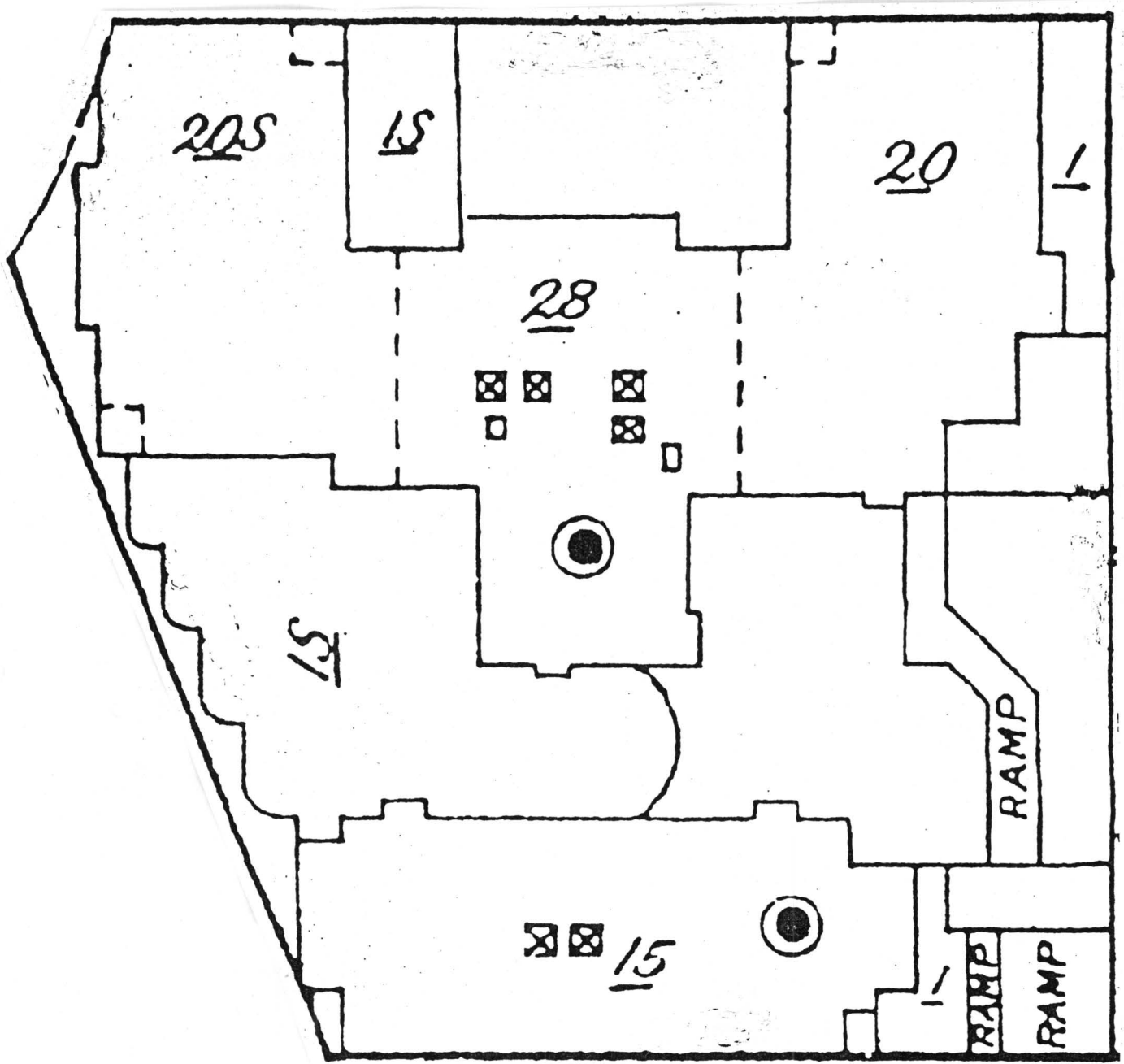
44. 312.
45. Paul Goldberger, "The City's Top 10 Apartment Buildings," *NYT*, Oct. 6, 1977, C1 and 6.
46. Paul Goldberger, *The City Observed: New York* (N.Y.: Vintage Bks., 1979), 180.
47. Stern, "With Rhetoric..."
48. Stern, etc., *New York 1930*, 424.
49. NY County; Sarah Korein obit., *NYT*, Nov. 4, 1998, C23; "Ackman-Ziff Seeks Lead Role in N.Y. Mortgages," May 16, 2000, [www.ackmanziff.com](http://www.ackmanziff.com) website; Richard Alleman, *The Movie Lover's Guide to New York* (N.Y.: Perennial Library, 1988), 65-66; Gray; Kelly Crow, "Trying to Protect a Zigzag Piece of a Famed Circle," *NYT*, Sept. 2, 2001; *Manhattan Address Directories* (1941-86).
50. 240 Central Park South blueprints.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of these buildings, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that 240 Central Park South Apartments 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.

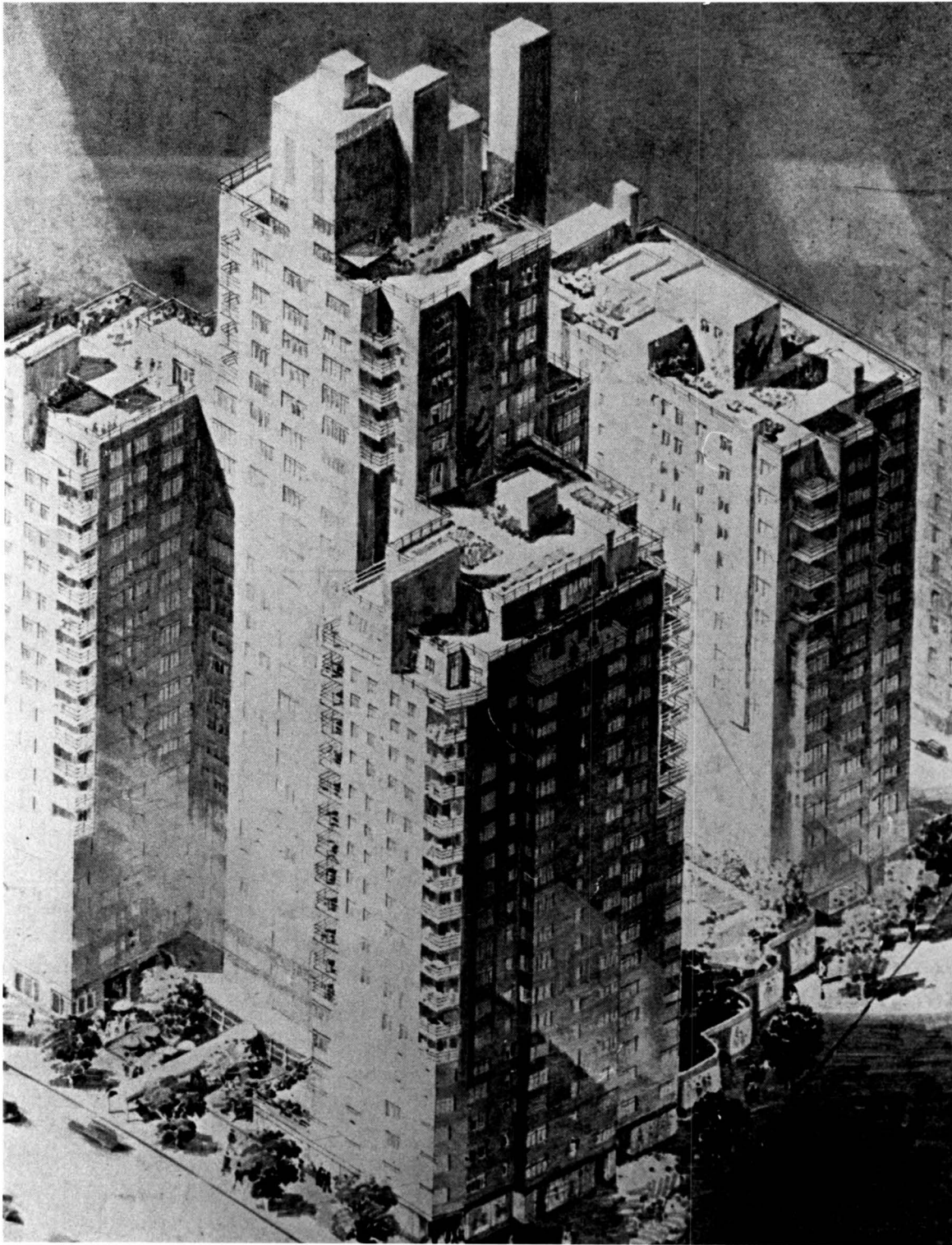
The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, 240 Central Park South Apartments, built in 1939-40 to the design of Mayer & Whittlesey by the Mayer family's J.H. Taylor Construction Co. for the J.H. Taylor Management Corp., was one of Manhattan's largest luxury apartment projects of its day; that it is a significant and innovative complex that represents the transition between 1930s Art Deco style apartment towers with courtyards (characteristic of Central Park West) and post-World War II "modernist" apartment houses; that the complex consists of a 20-story, C-shaped-in-plan building (with an 8-story tower), facing Central Park, connected by ground-story lobbies and rounded shopfronts (following the diagonal of Broadway) to a 15-story building to the south, with landscaped open space including the entrance court, central courtyard and adjacent shops' rooftops, and roof terraces; that the complex is noted for its sophisticated planning, with the architects particularly skillful in adapting their plan to a highly prominent and complex site, with frontages along Central Park South, Columbus Circle, Broadway and West 58<sup>th</sup> Street; that, covering only about half of the lot, the buildings provided a maximum amount of light, air, quiet, and corner apartments, which featured cantilevered balconies and views (many of Central Park); that the buildings are notable for the modernist near-lack of applied ornament, or as stated by *Architectural Forum* in 1941, "the architectural character of these buildings stems directly from the plans... and the fenestration"; that, clad in an orangish-colored brick, the buildings were detailed with broad steel casement windows and the contrasting concrete of the balcony slabs, with Amedee Ozenfant's mosaic "The Quiet City" decorating the front entrance and rooftop vertical architectural elements enlivening the skyline; that 240 Central Park South Apartments was marketed with an explicit suburban appeal, and the slogan "Where the Park is Part of the Plan," at a time when Manhattan was losing population to the outer boroughs and suburbs; that the apartment complex received critical acclaim, including Lewis Mumford in *The New Yorker* in 1940, who praised its "ingenious" planning solution, and *Architectural Forum*, which called it "one of the best apartment buildings yet produced"; and that the firm of Mayer & Whittlesey, founded in 1935 (Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass after 1945), was noted for planning and apartment housing, such as Manhattan House (1950-51, with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill).

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 a Landmark 240 Central Park South Apartments, 240 Central Park South (aka 232-246 Central Park South (West 59<sup>th</sup> Street), 233-241 West 58<sup>th</sup> Street, and 1792-1810 Broadway), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 1030, Lot 58, as its Landmark Site.

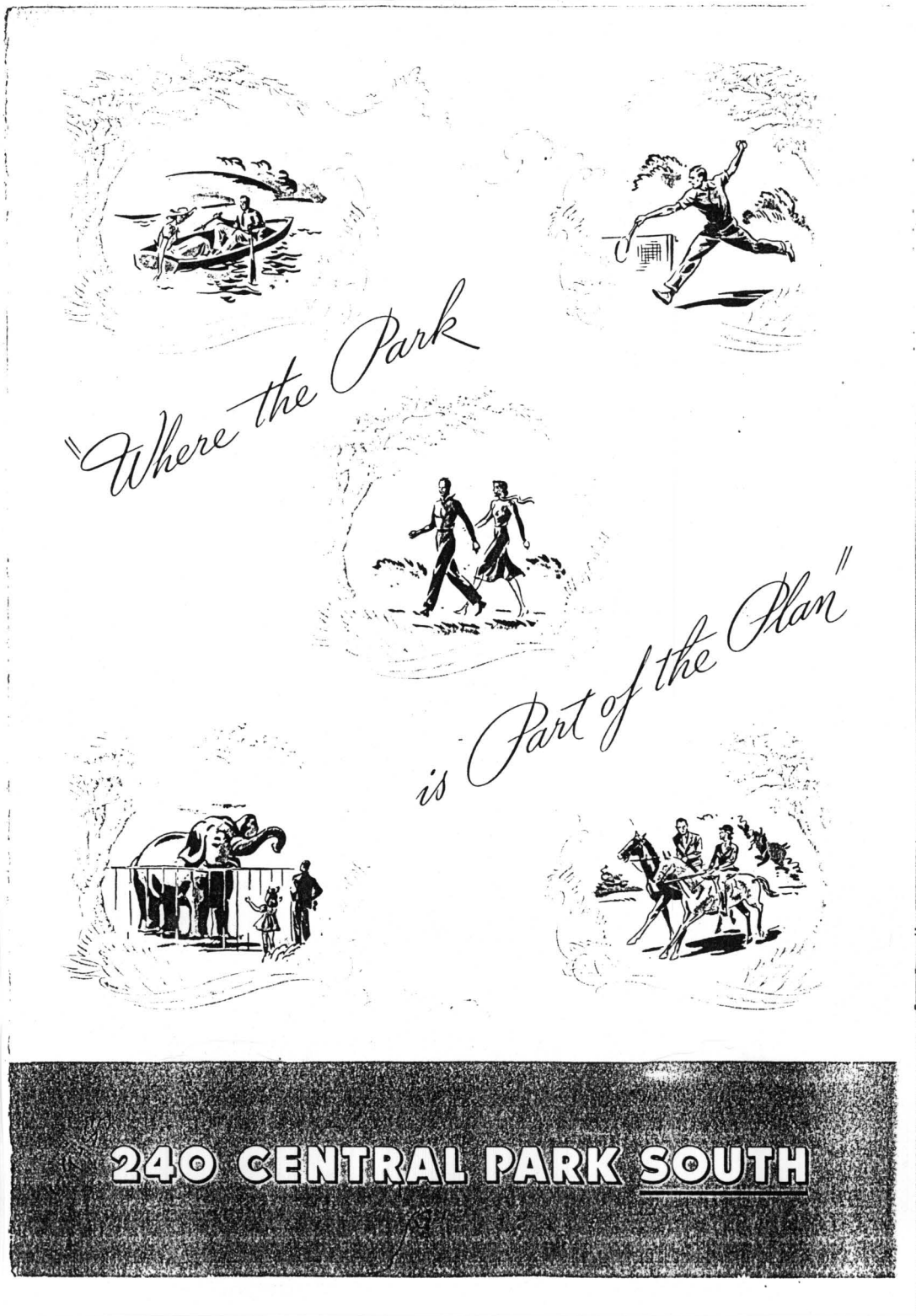


Site Plan of 240 Central Park South Apartments

Source: Sanborn, *Manhattan Land Book* (2000-2001), pl. 82



**Preliminary Rendering of 240 Central Park South Apartments**  
Source: *Real Estate Record & Guide* (Jan. 27, 1940)

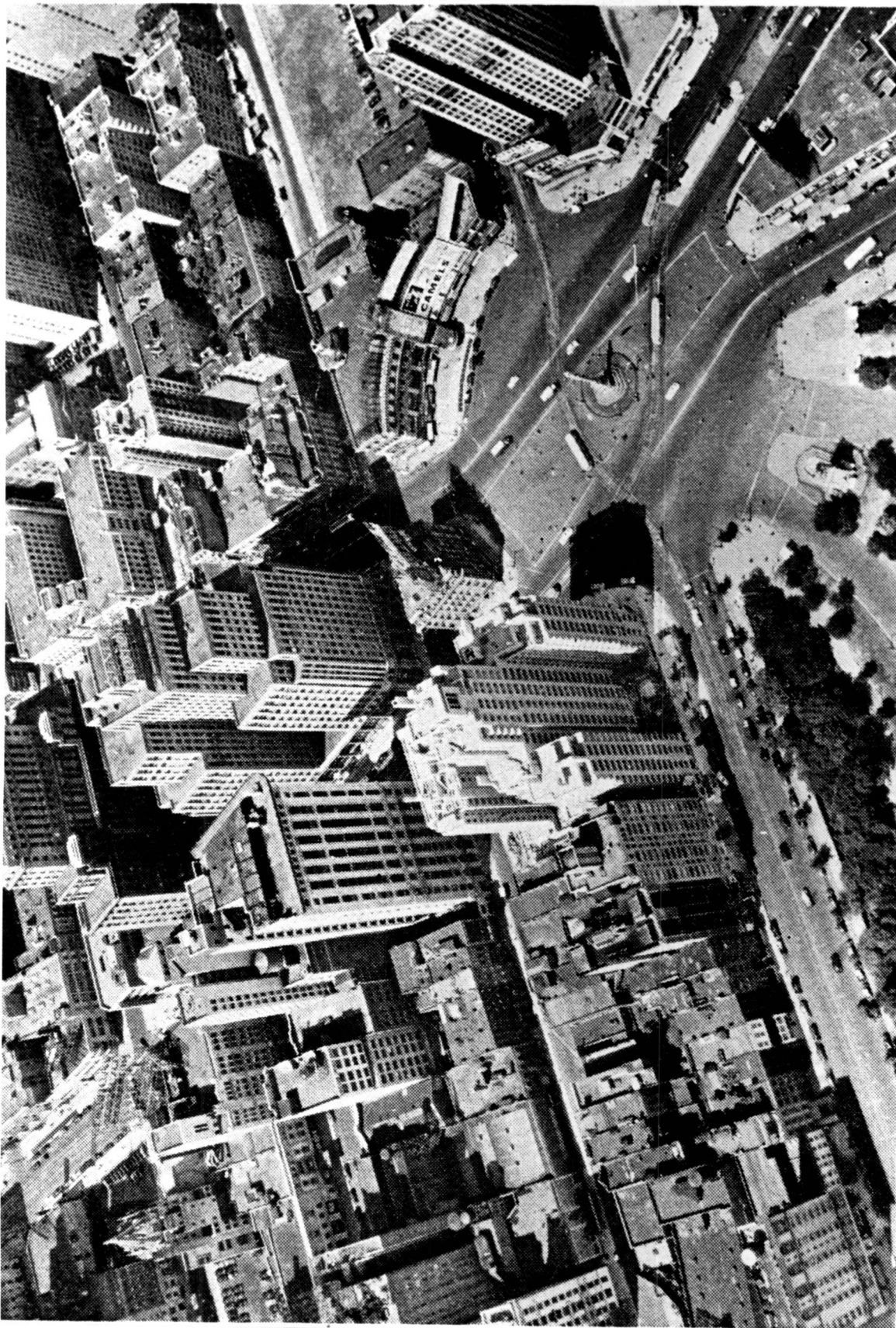


Cover of 240 Central Park South Apartments Prospectus (c. 1940)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass





**240 Central Park South Apartments**  
Photo: Richard Garrison (c. 1940)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



**Aerial View of 240 Central Park South Apartments and Columbus Circle Vicinity**  
Source: Arnold & Kellogg, *Real Estate Record & Guide* (Aug. 17, 1940)



**240 Central Park South Apartments**, "The Quiet City" mosaic mural, by Amedee Ozenfant  
Photo: Mattie Edwards Hewitt (1941)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



**240 Central Park South Apartments, entrance court**  
Photo: Mattie Edwards Hewitt (c. 1941)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



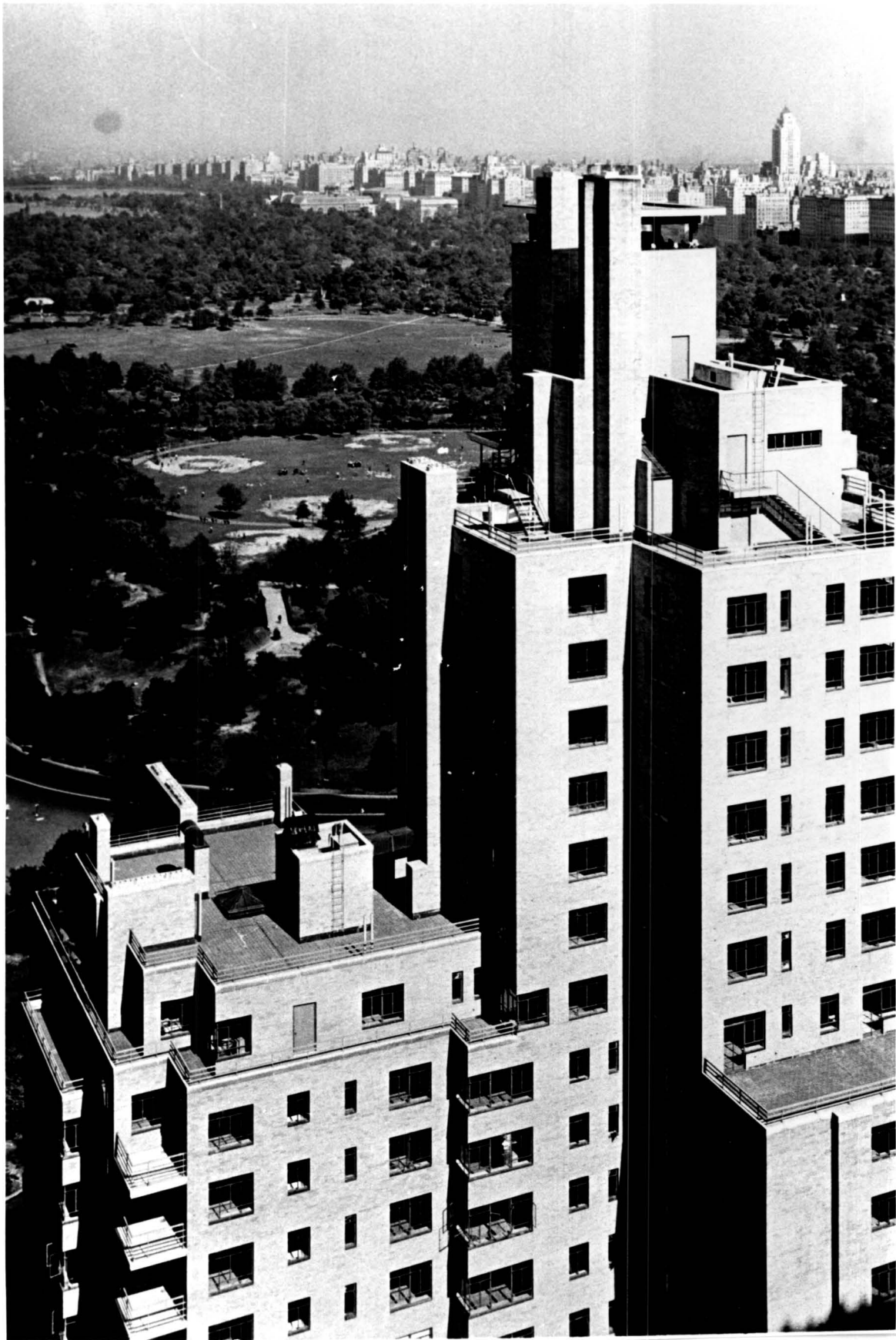
**240 Central Park South Apartments**  
Photo: Mattie Edwards Hewitt (c. 1941)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



**240 Central Park South Apartments, aerial view**  
Photo: Richard Garrison (c. 1940)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



**240 Central Park South Apartments, Columbus Circle facade**  
Photo: Richard Garrison (1940)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



**240 Central Park South Apartments, roof terraces and tower**  
Photo: Mattie Edwards Hewitt (c. 1941)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass





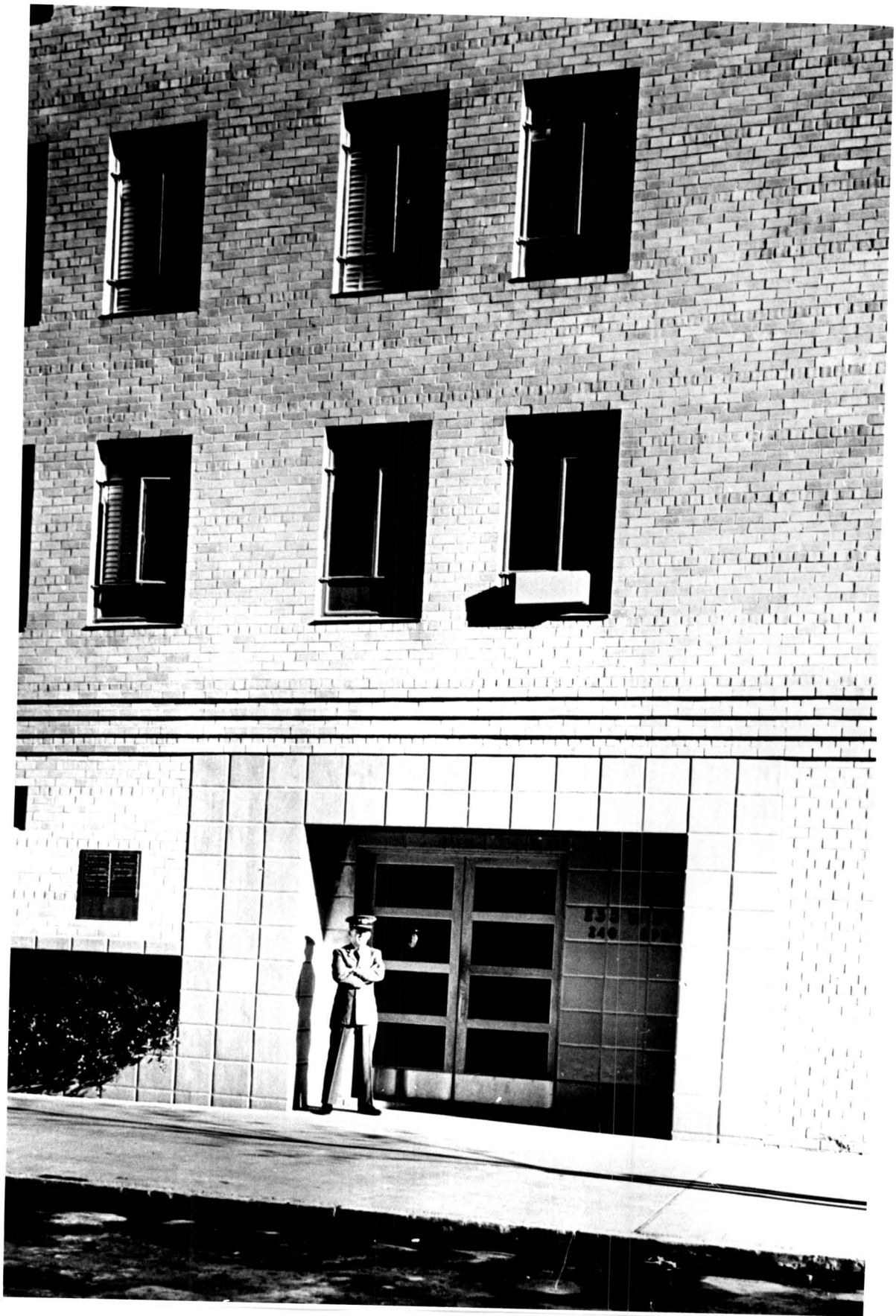
240 Central Park South Apartments, Columbus Circle/Broadway shopfronts

Photo: Richard Garrison (c. 1940)

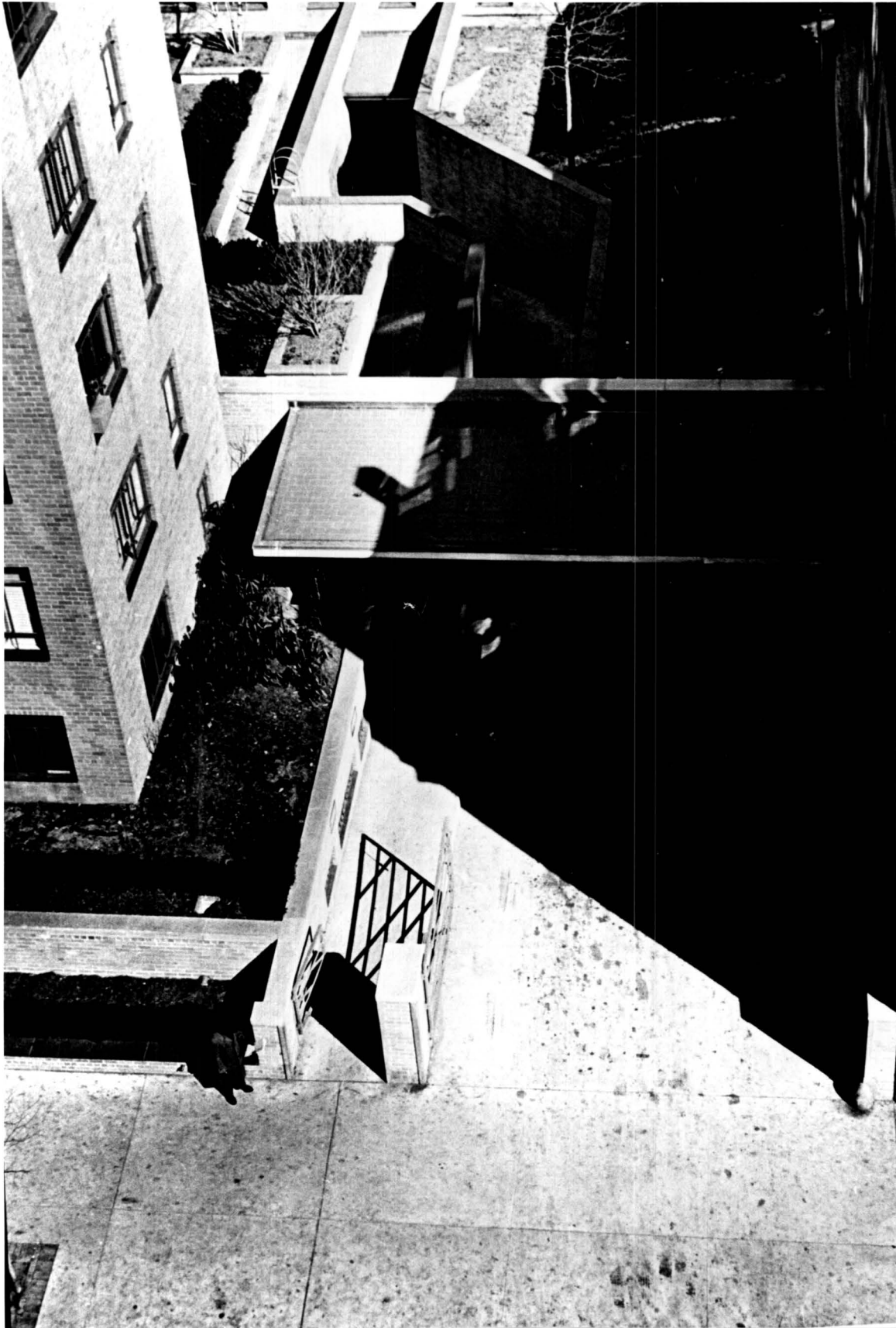
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



240 Central Park South Apartments, Columbus Circle/Broadway shopfronts  
Photo: Richard Garrison (c. 1940)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



**240 Central Park South Apartments, West 58<sup>th</sup> Street entrance**  
Photo: Richard Garrison (1940)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



**240 Central Park South Apartments**, off-street loading area and service entrance (West 58<sup>th</sup> Street)  
Photo: Richard Garrison (c. 1940)  
Courtesy of Elliott M. Glass



**240 Central Park South Apartments**

Photo: Landmarks Preservation Commission (1979)



240 Central Park South Apartments, view from West 58<sup>th</sup> Street  
Photo: Carl Forster



**240 Central Park South Apartments**  
Photo: Carl Forster

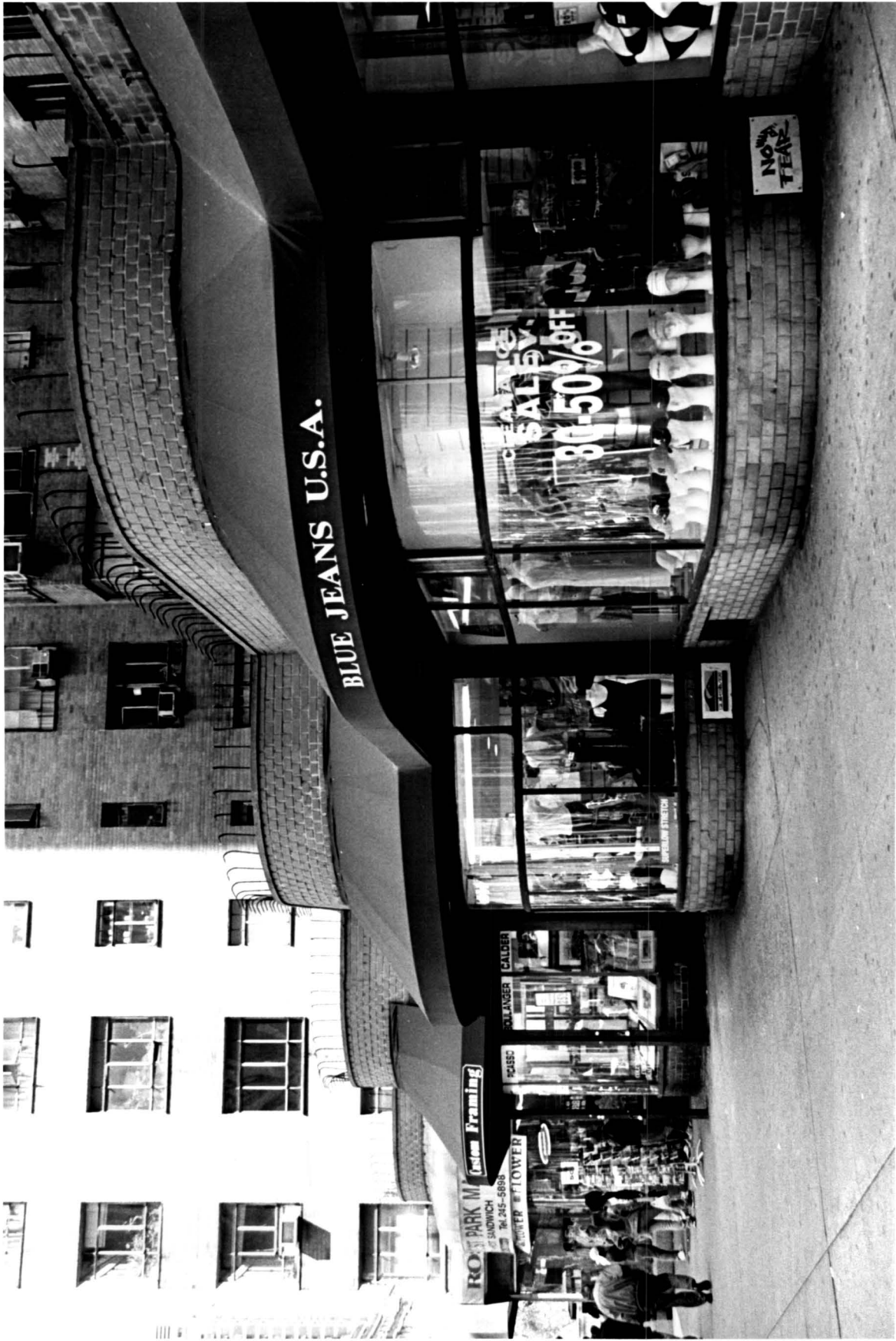


240 Central Park South Apartments, entrance court  
Photo: Carl Forster

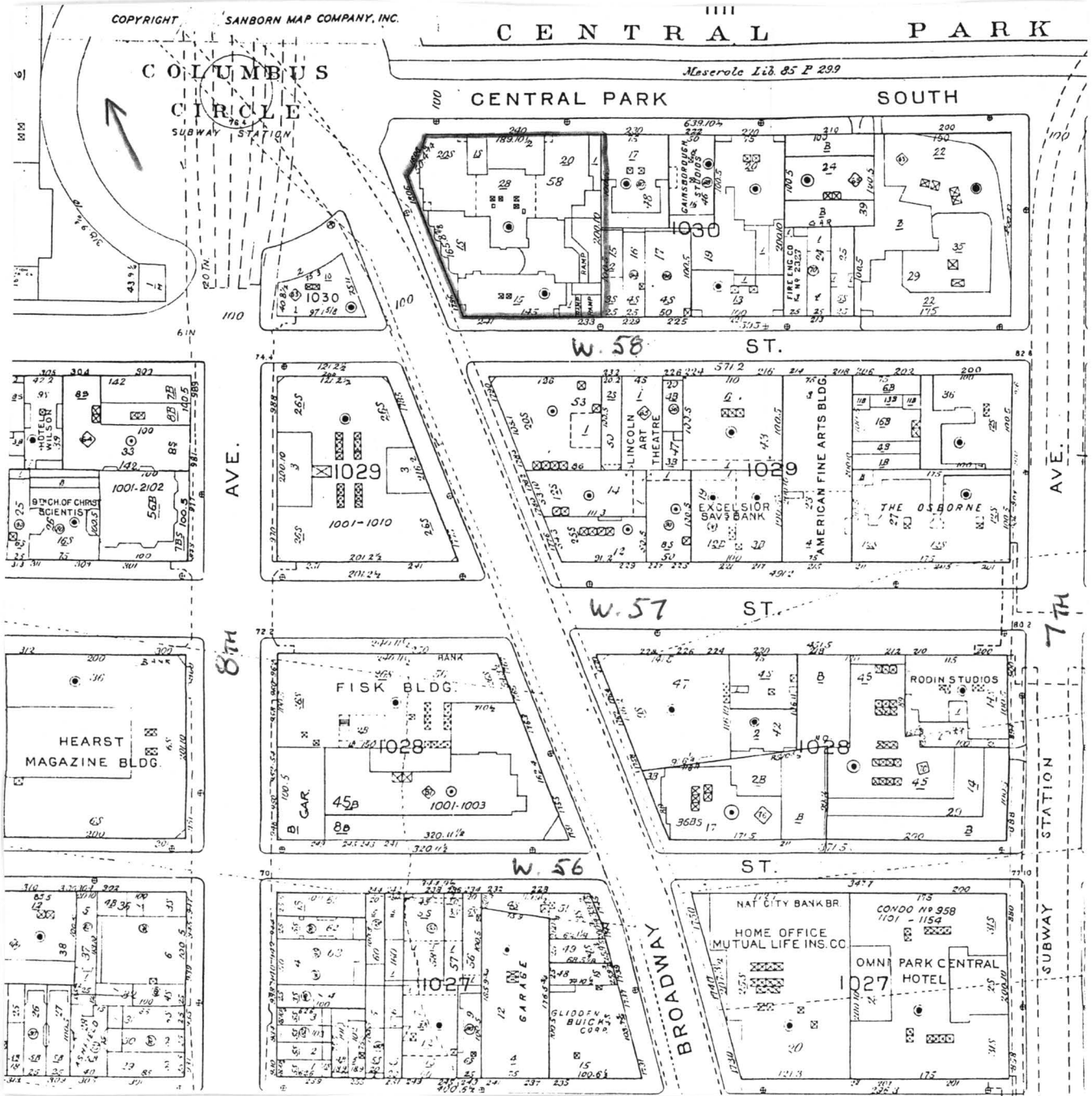




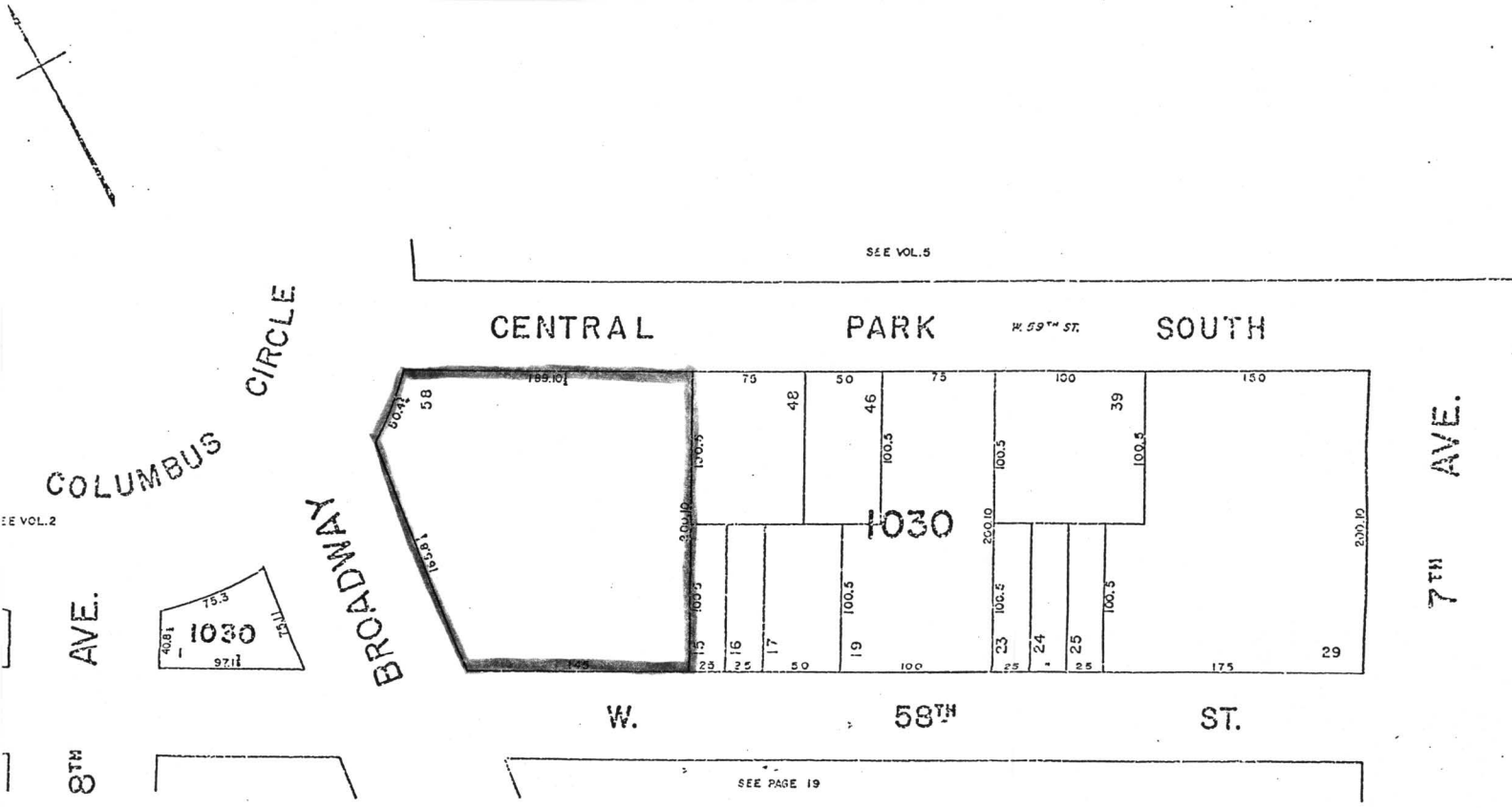
**240 Central Park South Apartments, tower**  
Photo: Carl Forster



240 Central Park South Apartments, Broadway shopfronts  
Photo: Carl Forster



240 Central Park South Apartments  
Source: Sanborn, *Manhattan Land Book* (2000-2001), pl. 82



**240 Central Park South Apartments**  
 Landmark Site: Manhattan Tax Map Block 1030, Lot 58  
 Source: Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map