

**SOCIETY HOUSE of the AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS**, 220 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan. Built 1896-97, Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz, architect; annex 1905-06, [Cyrus L.W.] Eidlitz & [Andrew C.] McKenzie, architect; ground-story alteration 1918, Arnold W. Brunner, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1028, Lot 42.

On March 18, 2008, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing was continued to April 15, 2008 (Item No. 1). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two people spoke in favor of designation: representatives of the Historic Districts Council and Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America. A representative of the building's owner indicated that they did not oppose designation, but wanted regulation to be limited to the front facade. In addition, the Commission received a resolution from Manhattan Community Board 5 and a letter from State Senator Liz Krueger in support of designation.

### Summary

Built in 1896-97 to the French Renaissance Revival style design of architect Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz, the Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers was the headquarters of the organization founded in 1852. As the engineering profession grew rapidly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its membership increased, ASCE needed a new building, said to be the first such project for a professional American engineering society. After a site was selected on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, the wide cross-town thoroughfare with a distinguished history associated with the arts and various organizations for over a century, a limited design competition was held in 1896 and Eidlitz was selected. The Society House is clad in white glazed brick, with intricately-carved Indiana limestone ornament. The facade, dominated by an enframed elliptical ogee arch on the second story that is surmounted by a tripartite window group, is further embellished by smaller second-story ogee-arched lintels, quoins, and a modillioned cornice topped by a parapet. As its attendance increased, ASCE found it necessary to construct an annex in 1905-06; the design by Eidlitz & [Andrew C.] McKenzie continued that of the original portion. Eidlitz, often linked with commissions from the telephone industry, also produced a wide and distinguished variety of designs for public, institutional, and commercial structures. After ASCE moved in 1917 to new quarters, it retained ownership of its former Society House until 1966. Due to its close proximity to the "Automobile Row" section of Broadway, the building was leased in 1918-27 as offices and showrooms of the Ajax Rubber Co., one of the nation's leading manufacturers of pneumatic tires, and in 1927-28 as a showroom for luxury Stearns-Knight automobiles. The 1918 ground-story alteration, by architect Arnold W. Brunner, included re-cladding and creation of wide storefront bays. From 1928 to 1973, this was the location of one of the Schrafft's chain of restaurants, especially popular in its earlier years as a center for women's dinners and functions. In 1975, the ground story was leased by Lee's Art Shop, known for its traditional art supplies and operated by Gilbert and Ruth Steinberg, who purchased the building in 1994.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### West 57<sup>th</sup> Street: a Cultural Center of New York<sup>1</sup>

West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, particularly the blocks between Sixth Avenue and Broadway, is part of the wide cross-town thoroughfare that has sometimes evoked comparison to the elegant Rue de la Paix in Paris, and has been associated with the arts for over a century. In the early 1870s, town houses and mansions for New York's elite began to be constructed along Fifth Avenue and the adjacent blocks on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. Other structures began to pave the way for the neighborhood's reputation as an artistic center. The Sherwood Studios (1880, attributed to John H. Sherwood; demolished), 58 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, built by financier-art collector Sherwood; and the Rembrandt (1881, Hubert & Pirsson; demolished), 152 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, organized by painter/minister Jared Flagg, were early apartment houses that provided large studio space for artists. The Osborne Apartments (1883-85, James E. Ware; 1889; 1906), 205 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, was one of the largest and grandest apartment houses of its era and attracted numerous musicians over the years. Carnegie Hall (1889-95, William B. Tuthill), at the southeast corner of Seventh Avenue, became one of the nation's most legendary concert halls; residential studios were added to the building in 1896-97 (Henry J. Hardenbergh). The American Fine Arts Society Building (1891-92, Hardenbergh), 215 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, has been home to the Architectural League, Art Students League, and Society of American Artists, providing exhibition, classroom, and studio facilities; it was the site of "virtually every important exhibition of art and architecture held in the city"<sup>2</sup> for many years. Later buildings that provided residential and working space for artists include the 130 and 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Buildings (1907-08, Pollard & Steinam) and the Rodin Studios (1916-17, Cass Gilbert), 200 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. Additionally, there were the Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers (1896-97, Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz), 220 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street; Lotos Club (1907, Donn Barber), 110 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, a literary club founded in 1870; and the Louis H. Chalif Normal School of Dancing (1916, G.A. & H. Boehm), 163-165 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, one of the earliest American schools to instruct teachers in dance. The *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide* commented in 1916 that the neighborhood "abounds in structures devoted to the cultivation of the arts."<sup>3</sup> As indicated in the Federal Writers' Project's *New York City Guide* in 1939, "the completion of Carnegie Hall in 1891 established the district as the foremost musical center of the country. Manufacturers of musical instruments, especially pianos, opened impressive showrooms along Fifty-Seventh Street."<sup>4</sup> These included Chickering Hall (1924, Cross & Cross), 29 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, headquarters of the American Piano Co. which "manufactured its own line of pianos and held a controlling interest in the companies Knabe, Chickering, and Mason & Hamlin;"<sup>5</sup> and Steinway Hall (1924-25, Warren & Wetmore), 109-113 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>6</sup>

### American Society of Civil Engineers<sup>7</sup>

Founded in 1852, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) was open to membership by civil, geological, mining and mechanical engineers in good standing with ten years of professional experience, as well as to architects and other professionals who were "interested in the advancement of science."<sup>8</sup> The organization's constitution stipulated that New York City was to be its place of business. Early meetings were held at the Croton Aqueduct Dept. in a building located in what is now City Hall Park, but ASCE fell largely inactive after 1855, until its re-organization in 1867. Later meetings were held in the Chamber of Commerce Building, 63

William Street (1867-75); and at 4 East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (1875-77); 104 East 20<sup>th</sup> Street (1877-81); and 127 East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (1881-97), the latter location having a lecture hall, civil engineering library, and apartments. After the Civil War, the engineering profession grew rapidly with the vast expansion of the United States and its infrastructure. As a result, by 1897 ASCE had some 2,100 members. At its convention in June 1895, a decision was reached to obtain new headquarters, and ASCE's Board of Direction was given the authority to proceed, under Charles Warren Hunt, who served as secretary from 1895 to 1920.

### Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers<sup>9</sup>

By October 1895, a site for a new building was chosen on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street near Broadway, the location being considered especially favorable, as the street was quite wide; the character of the neighborhood was well-established, with quality buildings; many transit lines were nearby; and the eastern side of the property would allow for windows, as the Central Presbyterian Church next door was set back from the street.<sup>10</sup> At a November 1895 meeting, ASCE voted "that the construction and architecture of the new Society House be entrusted to Members of the American Society of Civil Engineers and to none others."<sup>11</sup> The two chosen lots were purchased by ASCE from Amos R. Eno and the Estate of Samuel Inslee in January 1896 for a total of \$80,000. A Committee on New Society House was appointed that same month, its duties being to choose an architect, submit plans, and recommend contracts, all subject to approval by the Board of Direction, as well as to approve payments to the architect, supervise the work, and report on the building's satisfactory completion. George A. Just was the committee chairman, and the other members were Charles W. Hunt, Thomas C. Clarke, Charles SooySmith, William R. Hutton, George H. Browne, Joseph M. Knap, and Bernard R. Green. ASCE members and friends were solicited for voluntary subscriptions to pay for the new building. Joseph M. Wilson, a vice president of ASCE, prepared plans for a \$90,000, three-story structure to have ground-story reception and meeting rooms, second-story offices, and third-story reading room and library.

At the 1896 ASCE annual meeting, however, it was resolved to hold a limited design competition for the new house instead, in which "all architects connected with the Society may participate,"<sup>12</sup> as well as specially-invited architects not affiliated with ASCE. Twelve designs (eight from members, four from invited architects) were received by May 1896,<sup>13</sup> and Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz, an invitee, was selected and retained as architect by the Board of Direction. Excavation on the site was begun in July 1896 by Herbert Stewart, but was halted, due in part to financial considerations. A later ASCE report indicated that "during the spring and summer the plans and specifications were perfected, but owing to the impossibility of securing a loan on favorable terms, proposals for the erection of the building were not asked for until after the Presidential election."<sup>14</sup> The *New York Times* announced in August that "the building is to be of brick and granite, with terra cotta decorative work."<sup>15</sup> In November 1896, funding on favorable terms was secured from the Mutual Life Insurance Co. Eidlitz filed plans and construction began at the end of December 1896; the four-story, fifty-foot-wide structure, with steel girder and timber framing, had an estimated cost of \$100,000.

After competitive bidding, ASCE in December selected Charles T. Wills as the builder, for \$86,775. Wills headed one of the city's most prominent firms of the day, responsible for the construction of many notable structures, such as the Montauk Club (1889-91, Francis H. Kimball), 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Lincoln Place, Brooklyn; Judson Memorial Church (1888-93, McKim,

Mead & White), 51 Washington Square South; Presbyterian Building (1894-95, Rowe & Baker), 156 Fifth Avenue; American Surety Co. Building (1894-96, Bruce Price), 100 Broadway; and University Club (1896-1900, McKim, Mead & White), 1 West 54<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>16</sup> Construction work on ASCE's Society House proceeded rapidly during the first several months, but was slowed down by the city's striking steamfitters and plasterers. The house was completed in October 1897, at a cost of \$91,275 (\$206,284 including the land and interior decoration), and was formally opened to the public on November 24, 1897, at a ceremony attended by some 550 people. In his address, ASCE president Benjamin M. Harrod reiterated that this was not a clubhouse, but a professional association house:

*Our intention in erecting this commodious building has not been limited to serving the close uses of a club, or even to providing a professional resort for our own members. We have been moved by larger aims, and have builded with the hope that we might greatly aid in promoting those objects of a National Society, and in supplying those wants of our profession which have been made prominent and important by the extent and direction of its evolution during the present generation.*<sup>17</sup>

Facilities within the new building (not subject to this designation) included: janitor's apartment and storage and publication rooms in the basement and sub-basement (as well as heating and electrical equipment in the sidewalk vault space); secretary's offices, and reception, coat, serving, and lounging rooms on the ground story; reading room and auditorium (seating over 400) on the second story; clerical offices and model room/ museum on the third story; and a fourth-story library stack room (with a capacity of over 100,000 volumes). A 1903 ASCE booklet on the Society House stated that "the project for a building to be prepared and erected solely for the use of a professional engineering society [was] the first project of this kind in America."<sup>18</sup>

Eidlitz's design for the Society House received favorable comment. The *Times* noted that "its architecture is in the French Renaissance, the material used being Indiana limestone richly carved."<sup>19</sup> The *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide* considered that Eidlitz wisely deferred to the Francois I style of the American Fine Arts Society Building across the street, though

*the front makes the impression of a Gothic building [and] is dignified, balanced and harmonious, and in detail it is highly interesting... the design of the ornament is so artistic as to invite and to repay study. Upon the whole it is one of the most successful of our recent buildings, and is especially exemplary for the example it sets of conformity and appropriateness in a quarter in which such an example was especially needful and is likely to be especially useful ... the basement... is in Indiana limestone, which material is used also in the wrought work of the superstructure against a field of nearly white brick. The combination is effective, and has the advantage of giving effective relief and detachment to the carved ornament.*<sup>20</sup>

*The Iron Age*, echoing the *Times*, called it "a beautiful example of French Renaissance in Indiana limestone richly carved, and is a notable addition to the ever increasing list of New York's handsome buildings."<sup>21</sup> Photographs of the building were featured in *Architectural Record* and *American Architect & Building News* in 1898.

The Society House is clad in white glazed brick, with intricately-carved Indiana limestone ornament. The facade, dominated by an enframed elliptical ogee arch on the second

story that is surmounted by a tripartite window group, is further embellished by smaller second-story ogee-arched lintels, quoins, and a modillioned cornice topped by a parapet. Originally, the ground story had a central entrance, approached by a low stoop, flanked by bipartite windows.

Architect: Cyrus Lazelle Warner Eidlitz/ Eidlitz & McKenzie <sup>22</sup>

Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz (1853-1921) was born in New York City into a family of eminent architects, engineers, and builders. He was the son of the distinguished architect Leopold Eidlitz (1823-1908), born in Prague of Austrian Jewish heritage, who was a founding member of the American Institute of Architects (1857) and was particularly noted for his involvement in the design of the Produce Exchange, Tweed Courthouse, and Temple Emanu-El in New York City, and New York State Capitol, Albany. Cyrus was named for his grandfather, Cyrus Lazelle Warner, also an architect, who is best known for the design of the Beth Elohim Synagogue (1840-41), Charleston, S.C. His uncle, Marc Eidlitz, was the head of one of the most prominent building concerns in New York, while two other uncles, Samuel A. and Benjamin W. Warner, were architects specializing in commercial work. His brother, Leopold, and a cousin, Charles S. Warner, were engineers.

Cyrus Eidlitz studied at a preparatory school in Geneva, Switzerland, then at the Royal Polytechnic Institute, Stuttgart, Germany, in 1871-72. He entered his father's office as draftsman, and in 1876 established his own practice; an early commission in 1878-79 was the rebuilding of the fire-damaged St. Peter's Church, 2500 Westchester Avenue, the Bronx, built to his father's design in 1853-55.<sup>23</sup> Leopold Eidlitz was responsible for assisting his son in obtaining work (the two shared an office, also with brother Leopold). As his career progressed into the 1880s, Cyrus Eidlitz worked largely in the Richardsonian Romanesque stylistic vein. Among his notable buildings were Michigan Central Railroad Stations (1882-83, demolished; and 1887), Detroit and Kalamazoo, Michigan; Dearborn Street Station (1883-85), Chicago; Buffalo [New York] Public Library (1884-87, demolished); and San Antonio [Texas] National Bank (1886).

In New York City, Eidlitz designed the city's earliest consolidated telephone exchange structures for the Metropolitan Telephone & Telegraph Co., including Cortlandt Street (1886-87, demolished), 140 Spring Street (1889-90), West 38<sup>th</sup> Street (c. 1890, demolished), and Broad Street (1890, demolished). Institutional and commercial commissions included the Racquet & Tennis Club (1890-91, demolished), 27 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street; Bank for Savings (1893-94, facades extant), 280 Park Avenue South; Fidelity and Casualty Building (1893-94, demolished), 99 Cedar Street; Association of the Bar of the City of New York Clubhouse (1895), 42 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street;<sup>24</sup> Townsend Building (1896-97), 1121 Broadway;<sup>25</sup> and Washington Life Insurance Co. Building (1897-98, demolished), Broadway and Liberty Street. An association with the Western Electric Co. led to the design of its buildings at 125-131 Greenwich Street (1888-89); and 455-465 West Street and 734-742 Washington Street (1896-99 and 1899-1900; later Bell Telephone Laboratories/ Westbeth). Eidlitz designed Shingle style summer residences in East Hampton for himself and his sister, Harriet Quackenbush (1896-97 and 1899).

Around 1904, the firm of Eidlitz & McKenzie was established, primarily to handle commissions associated with the telephone business, such as the exchanges at 126-130 Orchard Street (1902) and 380-386 Convent Avenue (1906). Andrew Campbell McKenzie (1861-1926), born in Dunkirk, N.Y., had entered Eidlitz's office c. 1900. The firm's most famous commission was the *New York Times* Building (1903-05; re-clad 1966), at twenty-five stories then the city's

tallest structure. Cyrus Eidlitz retired in 1910, after which the firm continued as McKenzie, [Stephen F.] Voorhees & [Paul] Gmelin (1910-26), and Voorhees, Gmelin & [Ralph] Walker (1926-38), both of which continued the association with the design of telephone structures, including the Barclay-Vesey Building (1923-26), 140 West Street.<sup>26</sup>

#### Annex of the Society House of 1905-06<sup>27</sup>

In 1903, Andrew Carnegie announced a donation of one million dollars towards construction of a national engineers clubhouse, proposed as a combined facility for the Engineers' Club of New York, ASCE, American Society of Mechanical Engineers, American Institute of Electrical Engineering, and American Institute of Mining Engineers. ASCE, however, declined to join this scheme following a referendum of its membership. Instead, the Board of Direction embarked on an expansion of its Society House, due to, as it was later reported, "the fact that the Entrance Hallway, Auditorium and Lounging Room were unequal to providing comfortably for the increasing attendance at Annual Meetings."<sup>28</sup>

In April 1904, ASCE's secretary announced a contract for the purchase of the adjacent lot to the west, which was acquired for \$100,000 in June from the United States Realty & Construction Co. A committee was appointed December 1904 to "confer with the Architect [then Eidlitz & McKenzie] and to report plans for the enlargement of the Society House."<sup>29</sup> In May 1905, the contract for construction of the annex and alteration of the existing house was awarded to the low bidder, William L. Crow, for \$52,497. The William L. Crow Construction Co., incorporated in 1906 and headed by William Langstaff Crow ( -1909), was the successor to the building concern established in 1840 by his father, Langstaff N. Crow (c. 1821-1892). One of the city's leading builders, the firm was responsible for the construction of such varied structures as the De Vinne Press Building (1885-86, Babb, Cook & Willard), 393-399 Lafayette Street;<sup>30</sup> and Vanderbilt Hotel (1910-13, Warren & Wetmore), 4 Park Avenue, and specialized in clubhouse construction, including the Engineers Club (1905-06, Whitfield & King), 32 West 40<sup>th</sup> Street, and Princeton, Alpha Delta Phi, Edward Clark, and Chemists Clubs. The two-bay, twenty-five-foot-wide ASCE annex was constructed between June 1905 and January 1906, at a cost of \$61,430; the new space on the second story allowed for expansion of the library and auditorium. The design continued that of the original portion; the ground story originally had two windows.

By 1914, the Engineering Societies Building (1907, James Gamble Rogers), 33 West 39<sup>th</sup> Street, constructed with Andrew Carnegie's gift, was clear of debt and ASCE was offered the status of a "founding society" if it finally joined the other member organizations. This time, ASCE accepted the offer, and two stories were added to the structure for ASCE's use. In December 1917, ASCE moved to the Engineering Societies Building. ASCE retained ownership of its former Society House until 1966, and it was later reported that it "became a highly profitable investment"<sup>31</sup> as a leased property. The church next door was demolished in 1916 for a three-story office building for the Consolidated Gas Co. (Warren & Wetmore, architect).

ASCE's Society House was leased immediately (December 1917), with the *New York Times* announcing that "the Federal Food Board moves today into the old building of the American Society of Civil Engineers... The State Food Commission and the City Food Administrator are now merged in the Federal Food Board."<sup>32</sup> The board's wartime mandate included food conservation, elimination of waste and unnecessary distribution costs, and price regulation, as well as maintaining a Bureau of Complaints. The National Agricultural Prize Commission, which reviewed city garden food production, was also located here in 1917-18.

### Broadway: Automobile Row<sup>33</sup>

The American automobile, or “horseless carriage,” was initially manufactured in the 1890s as a luxury item. In 1902, there were a dozen “significant producers” of automobiles in the United States. Three dozen new automobile manufacturers, including a number of former carriage and bicycle companies, had joined the marketplace by 1907, but several firms had failed. Henry Ford, among others, worked on the mass production of automobiles, thus enabling costs to be lowered around 1910. By the 1920s, there were forty-four American automobile manufacturers.<sup>34</sup>

*Rider's New York City* guidebook in 1923 observed that Broadway, from the high West 40s “to approximately 66<sup>th</sup> St. is the section popularly known as ‘Automobile Row,’ comprising the New York sales rooms of the leading automobile manufacturers, tire makers and dealers in special automobile parts or accessories.”<sup>35</sup> This was actually a northern continuation along Broadway of the horse, carriage, and harness businesses that had been located around Longacre (later Times) Square since the late-19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1910, there were dozens of automobile-related businesses, including many small automobile or body manufacturers, lining Broadway particularly between West 48<sup>th</sup> Street and Columbus Circle.<sup>36</sup> In 1917, *The Hub*, an American automobile manufacturers’ journal, identified New York as

*a center of auto manufacture... one of the chief, if not the foremost of markets, for the sale and distribution of automobiles... [but also] a locality where the assembling, manufacturing, and service branches of the industry have developed to a remarkable extent. As a sales center, New York is actually the center of the country, practically every motor car manufacturer in the country maintaining a branch office in this city.*<sup>37</sup>

### Ajax Rubber Company and Stearns-Knight Automobiles<sup>38</sup>

In July 1918, the Ajax Rubber Co. (Horace DeLisser, founder and president), one of the nation’s leading manufacturers of pneumatic tires and tubes, leased the former Society House for its offices and showrooms.<sup>39</sup> The ground story of the building was altered for Ajax’s showrooms by architect Arnold W. Brunner and completed in January 1919. This alteration included re-cladding capped by a molded and corbeled cornice, and creation of wide storefront bays. Brunner (1857-1925), a nationally respected architect, city planner, and proponent of the City Beautiful Movement, was formerly a partner in the firm of Brunner & [Thomas] Tryon from 1885 to 1897. He participated in the design of such notable neo-Classical style buildings as the Shearith Israel Synagogue (1896-97), 99 Central Park West; Free Public Baths of the City of New York, East 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bath (1904-05), 538 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street; and Public Baths, Asser Levy Place (1904-06, with William M. Aiken).<sup>40</sup>

The Ajax Rubber Co. was founded in New York in 1905, supported by automobile manufacturers attempting to prevent a monopoly of tire manufacturing. In 1906, Ajax merged with the Grieb Rubber Co., having its factories in Trenton, N.J., making automobile and truck tires and inner tubes. Ajax maintained administrative offices in New York City. The success of the firm led to the purchase of another Trenton rubber operation in 1915, then acquisition of the Racine [Wis.] Rubber Co. By 1919, Trenton and Racine were co-equal manufacturing centers for Ajax, but a recession in 1919-21 severely affected profits. After recovery through a 1922 refinancing, Ajax expanded, with new plants in Nashville, Texas, and Fresno.

In July 1927, the ground-story showroom space of the former Society House was sub-leased by the Ajax Rubber Co., with the *Times* announcing that

*a new sales and showroom for Stearns-Knight automobiles was opened July 1 at 21[8]-222 West Fifty-seventh Street. Operating as an entirely independent unit to the main Willys-Overland salesroom at Broadway and Fiftieth Street... models of both Stearns-Knight and Willys-Knight cars will be shown in the new quarters.*<sup>41</sup>

A January 1926 announcement had stated that

*control of the F.B. Stearns Company, oldest American Manufacturers of Knight Motored Cars, has been acquired by interests closely associated with John N. Willys. ... Stearns Knight Cars were the first Knight Cars built in America. They have upheld the European Knight tradition of "Luxury First – price last".*<sup>42</sup>

Frank Ballou Stearns built his first car in 1896, and produced the luxury Stearns-Knight automobile, "America's Most Luxurious Motor Car," using the then-superior engines of Charles Yale Knight, in Cleveland from 1911 until he retired and sold his interests in 1918. The Stearns firm was purchased in 1925 by John North Willys, whose Willys-Overland Co. of Toledo also used Knight engines; it continued manufacture of Stearns-Knight automobiles until December 1929. Stearns-Knight vacated the ground story of this building in August 1928.<sup>43</sup>

#### Schrafft's<sup>44</sup>

A leasing deal to "occupy the major portion" of the former ASCE Society House was announced in March 1928 by the Frank G. Shattuck Co., operators of the Schrafft's restaurant chain. The store did not open until March 1929, with dining rooms that could accommodate some 500 people. It was later reported that the rental, one of the "outstanding deals" brokered by Samuel J. Tankoos, was "in excess of \$2,500,000."<sup>45</sup> Schrafft's was started in 1898 by Frank Garrett Shattuck, after he convinced a Boston confectioner, the Viennese-born William F. Schraft (later Schrafft), to allow him to market the latter's boxed chocolates outside of the New England market. Shattuck first opened a small retail store in New York that year under the Schrafft name. He eventually expanded with a chain of restaurants that served lunch and ice cream, catering to a largely upper-middle class female clientele. The first Schrafft's store with meals opened in 1906 in Syracuse. By 1915, there were nine stores in Manhattan and Brooklyn, the first large New York restaurant opened at 48 Broad Street in 1919, and by 1934, there were 42 Schrafft's locations. As a popular restaurant chain, it was in competition in New York with such restaurant/cafeteria businesses as Horn & Hardart, Chock Full O'Nuts, Nedick's, Longchamps, Childs, Stewart's, and Bickford's.

The Schrafft's on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street was conveniently close to Carnegie Hall, the theater district, and shopping. Open from 8:00 a.m. until after midnight, it served breakfast, lunch, tea, dinner and after-theater meals, while facilities allowed for rental special functions.<sup>46</sup> A 1930 ad, indicating gender segregation existed in at least some of the spaces, stated that "the spacious Men's grill, on the second floor, is specially equipped to care for business men. Here, luncheon is served in strictly masculine surroundings."<sup>47</sup> Like other New York restaurants of the period, Schrafft's also operated under a policy of racial segregation. While most New York restaurant workers and clientele had previously been male, once women joined restaurant workforces female customers followed. Schrafft's is considered one of the earliest chains to exploit this fact. This was demonstrated by a May 1932 announcement regarding this location:



*new and larger headquarters of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs will be opened on the fourth floor of 220 West Fifty-seventh Street with a housewarming and tea... Mrs. Oliver Harriman will be the hostess... The new clubrooms have been contributed by the Frank G. Shattuck Company as a centre for the clubwomen of New York.*<sup>48</sup>

This was undoubtedly a shrewd business move, as this Schrafft's served as a center for many women's dinners and functions, a brief sampling of which included those of the National Council of Women (1932); Irene Club/ New York League of Girls Clubs' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations (1934 and 1935); Women's Overseas Service League annual dinner (1936); and Washington Headquarters of the D.A.R. tea (1937), to raise funds for the restoration of the Morris-Jumel Mansion.

Following the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, Schrafft's opened the Columbus Room here in 1936, advertised as "New York's newest smart bar and cocktail rendezvous... Luncheon – Cocktail Hour – Dinner – Supper."<sup>49</sup> Interior modifications were performed by architects Bloch & Hesse, who in 1940 modernized Schrafft's ground story and marquee, within Arnold W. Brunner's 1918 ground-story alteration. By 1939, the upper two stories of the building were converted into apartments. The restaurant continued to serve as a center for a variety of functions, such as a Schrafft's employees' breakfast (1942), with the former Postmaster General James A. Farley, rallying support for President Franklin D. Roosevelt; and a talk by silent film star Harold Lloyd (1957). Other tenants in the building included a travel service (c. 1940-70), and [Alfred] Fromm & [Franz W.] Sichel, early promoters of the California wine industry and sole distributors of Christian Brothers wines and brandies and Paul Masson champagnes (1946-56).<sup>50</sup>

ASCE moved in 1961 to the United Engineering Center, 345 East 47<sup>th</sup> Street, and finally sold its 57<sup>th</sup> Street property in May 1966 to the 218 West 57 Corp. (George M. Horn & Assocs.) for \$850,000. In turn, it was purchased for around a million dollars in August 1968 by the Arlen Operating Co. (Arthur G. Cohen and Arthur N. Levien, partners). That same month, it was announced that a new 45-story office tower (888 Seventh Avenue) would rise to the east, constructed by Arlen Realty & Development Corp. (founded in 1959 by Cohen and Levien), and that a small park (on the site of the former Consolidated Gas Co. building) would be created between the tower and the former ASCE Society House, which would remain extant and from which a "zoning credit" was received to allow a higher building height. By 1972, the fortunes of Schrafft's had diminished and the firm began to sell some of its properties; Schrafft's accounting division moved into this building. In December 1973, the *Times* listed a sublease agreement by Xenia Clubs International, owner of a sports club at 119 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, for its executive offices.

#### Later History of the Former ASCE Society House<sup>51</sup>

In June 1975, the ground story and basement of the former Society House were leased by Lee's Art Shop, operated by Gilbert and Ruth Steinberg. "Known for its traditional art supplies, as well as for all sorts of unusual crafts objects,"<sup>52</sup> the business had long been located in the Osborne Apartments building on the north side of 57<sup>th</sup> Street. By 1979, Arlen Realty & Development Corp., called by the *New York Times* "the nation's largest publicly owned real-estate company,"<sup>53</sup> was reporting total losses over six years of \$368 million, and a series of restructuring measures were contemplated. This property remained under a number of corporate entities associated with Arlen until 1994, when it was transferred to the 220 W. 57<sup>th</sup> Limited Partnership (Gilbert and Ruth Steinberg). Tenants listed in a 1980 city directory included the

Restaurant League of New York, New York State Dept. of Mental Hygiene, and typewriter/business machines, public relations, general contracting, and mobile geriatric unit firms. Lee's Art Shop underwent a 2002 interior renovation which expanded its retail space on all four stories, including framing, lighting and furniture divisions; the ground-story shopfront infill was replaced, while 1970s signage was retained.

### Description

The Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers was constructed in two phases: the eastern three bays in 1896-97, and the western two-bay annex in 1905-06, which continued the design of the original portion. The building is clad in white glazed brick, with intricately-carved Indiana limestone ornament. **Ground Story** Originally, the limestone-clad ground story of the original section had a central entrance, approached by a low stoop, flanked by bipartite windows with transoms, while the annex originally had two windows; the areaway was bordered with a stone balustrade. A 1918 alteration included stone re-cladding (now painted), with a granite bulkhead, capped by a molded and corbeled cornice, and creation of wide storefront bays. The current metal and glass shopfront infill (within the above 1918 alteration) dates from 2002, and includes a shop entrance and metal service doors at both ends; 1970s signage was retained above the shop entrance. **Second and Third Stories** The facade of the original portion is dominated by an carved and enframed elliptical ogee arch (within which is a tripartite window group with transoms and a carved spandrel panel) on the second story that is surmounted by a tripartite window group with decorative transom panels and carved surround. The original portion and annex are edged with quoins. Second-story windows have ogee-arched lintels above transoms and carved panels, and quoins; and third-story windows have label lintels and quoins. Windows were originally one-over-one double-hung wood sash (and wood-framed transoms), and are currently (post-1979) single-pane metal. **Fourth Story** The third story was originally terminated by a continuous molded stone bandcourse, and the fourth story had small single-pane windows with quoins. The window openings were enlarged (c. 1939) with one-over-one double-hung wood sash, interrupting the bandcourse. Current windows (post-1979) are single-pane metal. The original portion has four decorative panels. The building is terminated by a molded and modillioned stone cornice topped by a paneled parapet with balusters and the date of completion in Roman numerals. **East and Rear Walls** Due to the small open plaza space to the east, the east wall and portions of the rear walls of the former Society House are visible. The brick walls are unarticulated and mostly painted above the parged first story, with a few windows (filled with brick); there are rooftop bulkheads. Painted signs occur at the north end of the east wall.

Report prepared by  
**JAY SHOCKLEY**  
Research Department

## NOTES

1. Adapted from: LPC, *Louis H. Chalif Normal School of Dancing Designation Report* (LP-2041) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1999), prepared by Jay Shockley.
2. Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Massengale, *New York 1900* (N.Y.: Rizzoli Intl. Publs., 1983), 104.
3. “Chalif School of Dancing in West Fifty-Seventh Street,” *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide*, Apr. 15, 1916, 595.
4. Federal Writers’ Project, *New York City Guide* (N.Y.: Octagon Bks., 1939), 232.
5. John Tauranac, *New York From the Air* (N.Y.: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998).
6. The Osborne Apartments, Carnegie Hall, American Fine Arts Society Building, 130 and 140 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Studio Buildings, Rodin Studios, Chalif Normal School of Dancing, and Steinway Hall are designated New York City Landmarks.
7. [www.asce.org](http://www.asce.org) website; William H. Wisely, *The American Civil Engineer, 1852-1974: the History, Traditions, and Development of the American Society of Civil Engineers* (N.Y.: ASCE, 1974).
8. “The New House of the American Society of Civil Engineers,” *The Iron Age*, Nov. 25, 1897, 1.
9. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (NB 1356-1896); Wisely; “Recorded Real Estate Transfers,” *New York Times (NYT)*, Jan. 8, 1896, 15; “Home for Civil Engineers,” *NYT*, Aug. 2, 1896, 20; ASCE, *Proceedings* (1895), 115 and 198, (1896), 9-11, 61, 94, 129, and 181, (1897), 11-12, 122, and 187, and (1898), 11-12, 25-26, 53, and 180-183; “New House for Civil Engineers,” *NYT*, Nov. 21, 1897, 21; “New Clubhouse Opened,” *NYT*, Nov. 25, 1897, 5; *The Iron Age*, 1-2; “The Engineers’ House,” *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide*, Dec. 11, 1897, 903-904; Charles W. Hunt, *Historical Sketch of the American Society of Civil Engineers, 1852-1897* (N.Y.: ASCE, 1897), 59-60; “Charles T. Wills,” in Record and Guide, *A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City* (N.Y.: Arno Pr., 1967), reprint of 1898 edition, 319-320; Charles T. Wills, advertisement, *Year Book of the Architectural League of New York* (1898 and 1904); “Civil Engineers Meet,” *NYT*, Jan. 20, 1898, 12; “American Society of Civil Engineers,” *Architectural Record* (Jan.-Mar. 1898), 357; “Club-House of the American Society of Civil Engineers, 220 W. Fifty-seventh Street, New York, N.Y.,” *American Architect & Building News*, Aug. 20, 1898, pl. 61; ASCE, *The House of the American Society of Civil Engineers* (N.Y.: 1903); “Civil Engineers’ 1897 Clubhouse, in French Gothic,” *NYT*, Nov. 12, 2000, RE7.
10. The Gothic Revival style Central Presbyterian Church, an edifice originally designed by Leopold Eidlitz and built in 1851-52 as the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church at 19<sup>th</sup> Street, had been sold, dismantled, and re-erected on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street in 1876-78. Kathryn E. Holliday, *Leopold Eidlitz: Architecture and Idealism in the Gilded Age* (N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008), 168; “Dr. Hall’s Old Church,” *NYT*, Feb. 1, 1876, 8; “Taking a Church Home,” *NYT*, Aug. 11, 1878, 12; “An Old Church Renewed,” *NYT*, Oct. 14, 1878, 8.
11. ASCE, *Proceedings* (1896), 9.
12. *Ibid*, 61.
13. One design, a Beaux Arts composition, by William B. Bigelow and Frank E. Wallis, was published in the *American Architect & Building News*, Dec. 16, 1899.
14. ASCE, *Proceedings* (1897), 11.
15. Aug. 2, 1896.
16. The Montauk Club is located within the Park Slope Historic District, the Presbyterian Building is located within the Ladies’ Mile Historic District, and the other buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.

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17. "Address of B.M. Harrod, President," ASCE, *Transactions*, Nov. 24, 1897, 425.
  18. ASCE, *The House of the American Society of Civil Engineers*.
  19. Nov. 25, 1897.
  20. "The Engineers' House."
  21. *The Iron Age*.
  22. LPC, architects files; Montgomery Schuyler, "Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz," *Architectural Record* (July-Sept. 1895), 411-435; Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1840-1900* (N.Y.: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1979), 28; James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (N.Y.: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1989), 22, 52; Record and Guide; Holliday; Sarah B. Landau and Carl Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper, 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1996); "Cyrus Eidlitz," *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* 2, Adolf F. Placzek, ed. (N.Y.: Free Pr., 1982), 13; "Cyrus Lazelle Warner Eidlitz," *Dictionary of American Biography* 3, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds. (N.Y.: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1931), 60; Eidlitz, obit., *NYT*, Oct. 6, 1921, 13; McKenzie obit., *NYT*, Oct. 11, 1926, 21; Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1880* (N.Y.: Monacelli Pr., 1999); *New York 1900*.
  23. The church complex and cemetery is a designated New York City Landmark.
  24. It is a designated New York City Landmark.
  25. It is included within the Madison Square North Historic District.
  26. It is a designated New York City Landmark.
  27. New York County; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alt. 1190-1905); Langstaff N. Crow obit., *NYT*, Nov. 15, 1892, 2; "National Clubhouse for Engineers," *NYT*, May 4, 1903, 3; "Engineers to Carnegie," *NYT*, May 8, 1903, 2; "In the Real Estate Field: High Price for West 57<sup>th</sup> Street Plot," *NYT*, June 8, 1904, 15; "Engineers to Build Annex," *NYT*, May 21, 1905, 10; ASCE, *Proceedings* (1904), 166 and 490, (1905), 220, (1906), 227, and (1907), 12-13; William L. Crow obit. note, *NYT*, July 20, 1909, 7; "The Real Estate Field: To Build on Old Church Property," *NYT*, July 18, 1916, 18; William L. Crow Construction Co., *Service and Satisfaction: 83 Years of Progress, 1840-1923* (NY: 1923) and *100 Years, 1840-1940* (N.Y.: 1940); Charles W. Hunt obit., *NYT*, July 24, 1932, 22; Ralph L. Crow obit., *NYT*, Apr. 23, 1936, 23; "Old Firm Notes Building Changes," *NYT*, Feb. 4, 1940.
  28. ASCE, *Proceedings* (1906), 227.
  29. ASCE, *Proceedings* (1904), 490.
  30. The building is a designated New York City Landmark and is located within the NoHo Historic District.
  31. Wisely, 40.
  32. "Food Board in New Home," *NYT*, Dec. 10, 1917, 19.
  33. Adapted from: LPC, *A.T. Demarest & Company and Peerless Motor Car Company Buildings Designation Report* (LP-2082) (N.Y.: City of New York, 2000), prepared by Jay Shockley. Also David W. Dunlap, *On Broadway: A Journey Uptown Over Time* (N.Y.: Rizzoli, 1990), 179-200, and "Street of Automotive Dreams," *NYT*, July 7, 2000, E1 and 35; *Both Sides of Broadway from Bowling Green to Central Park* (N.Y.: De Leeuw Riehl Publg. Co., 1910).
  34. By this time, 125 firms had failed and the median longevity of these firms was only seven years. The industry would eventually be monopolized by a few large corporations concentrated in Michigan.
  35. Fremont Rider, *Rider's New York City* (N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1923), 235.
  36. Many of these businesses were located in structures built specifically for their automobile-related uses into the 1920s, including: Studebaker Brothers Co. Building (1902, James Brown Lord; demolished), No. 1600, a factory-office structure for the manufacture of wagons, carriages, automobiles, and trucks; Pope Garage

- (1905, Townsend, Steinle & Haskell), No. 1733, also the home of Buick Motor Co.; Lozier Motor Co. Building (1905, Francis H. Kimball, demolished), No. 1751; A.T. Demarest & Co. and Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings (1909, Francis H. Kimball), Nos. 1770 and 1760 (next door to the ASCE Society House), which became the first headquarters of the General Motors Corp. after 1918; B.F. Goodrich Tire Co. Building (1909, Howard Van Doren Shaw and Waid & Willauer), No. 1780-1782 (aka 225-227 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street); United States Rubber Co. Building (1911-12, Carrere & Hastings), No. 1784-1790; Ford Motor Co. Building (1917, Albert Kahn), No. 1710; Fisk Rubber Co. Building (1921, Carrere & Hastings and R.H. Shreve), No. 1765-1767; and General Motors Corp. Building (1926-27, Shreve & Lamb), No. 1769-1787, which was built above the earlier three-story Colonnade Building (1923, William Welles Bosworth). The U.S. Rubber Co. and Demarest & Co./ Peerless Motor Car Co. Buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.
37. "New York a Center of Auto Manufacture," *The Hub* (Dec. 1917), 17.
  38. NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alt. 1560-1918); *New York City Directories* (1920-34); John T. Cumbler, *A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics and Work in Trenton* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Pr., 1989), n. 68, 251; ASCE, *Proceedings* (1918), 992-993; "Real Estate Field: Commercial Leases," *NYT*, July 18, 1918, 16; "Civil Engineers to Lease Home," *NYT*, Oct. 25, 1918, 9; H. DeLisser obit., *NYT*, July 29, 1923, E1; *Automobile Year Book* (1917), 235; "Meetings and Elections: Ajax Rubber Company," *NYT*, Feb. 10, 1920, 26; Ajax Rubber Co., advertisement, *NYT*, July 14, 1921, 13; "Items of Interest in the Motor Trade," *NYT*, Nov. 25, 1923, XX11, and July 3, 1927, XX11; "F. & W. Grand Store in Yonkers to Expand," *NYT*, Aug. 18, 1927, 37; Stearns-Knight, advertisement, *NYT*, Jan. 3, 1926, XX8, July 1, 1927, 13, Aug. 19, 1927, 3, Sept. 2, 1927, 3, Mar. 25, 1928, and June 17, 1928; "Leasehold Deals," *NYT*, July 19, 1928, 37; "Stearns-Knight to Move," *NYT*, Aug. 1, 1928, 8; "Motors and Motor Men," *NYT*, Aug. 5, 1928; "Willys Overland Knight Registry," [www.clubs.hemmings.com](http://www.clubs.hemmings.com) website.
  39. Apparently a legal issue arose, since the *Times* carried an item in October that ASCE received permission for the lease from a Supreme Court justice.
  40. All three buildings are designated New York City Landmarks; Shearith Israel is also located within the Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District.
  41. "Items of Interest in the Motor Trade," *NYT*, July 3, 1927, XX11.
  42. "Announcement: Stearns-Knight Luxurious Motor Cars," *NYT*, Jan. 3, 1926, XX8.
  43. Manhattan address directories listed Racine Rubber Co. and Stearns-Knight Sales Corp. as tenants here until at least 1935.
  44. NY County; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alts. 269-1936, 3134-1940, 2154-1948); *Manhattan Address Directories* (1929-75); Joan K. Slomanson, *When Everybody Ate at Schrafft's* (Ft. Lee, N.J.: Barricade Bks., 2006); "Schrafft's Chain Leases," *NYT*, Mar. 14, 1928, 49; "New Schrafft's to Open Today," *NYT*, Mar. 8, 1929, 50; "Moral Drive Urged to Cure Social Ills," *NYT*, June 25, 1932, 15; "Irene Club 50 Years Old," *NYT*, Feb. 18, 1934, N5; "League Marks 50<sup>th</sup> Year," *NYT*, Mar. 3, 1935, 31; "Stony Wold Group Plans Tea Saturday," *NYT*, Mar. 1, 1936, N3; "Charity Bridge Planned," *NYT*, Mar. 14, 1936, 12; "Pershing Greets Women," *NYT*, May 22, 1936, 18; "D.A.R. to Give Tea Today," *NYT*, Jan. 12, 1937, 20; "U.D.C. Party on Tuesday," *NYT*, May 16, 1937, 87; Schrafft's, advertisements, *NYT*, Jan. 20, 1938, 2, Aug. 30, 1962, 46, and Oct. 26, 1971, 20; "Leases 13-Room Suite," *NYT*, May 3, 1939, 42; "Farley Speaks at Breakfast," *NYT*, Apr. 13, 1942, 10; "Ladycliff Alumnae Fete Set," *NYT*, Feb. 3, 1956, 17; "Camera Notes," Apr. 7, 1957, 147; "Engineers Sell Building," *NYT*, Apr. 28, 1966, 72; "Engineers Sell Building," *NYT*, May 27, 1966, 70; "News of Realty: 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. Project," *NYT*, Aug. 7, 1968, 68; "57<sup>th</sup> St. Building Bought," *NYT*, Aug. 23, 1968, 66; "Resnick Acquires Site," *NYT*, May 7, 1972, R8; "News of the Realty Trade: West 57<sup>th</sup> Street," *NYT*, Dec. 30, 1973; "Midday Havens, Lost to a Faster-Paced City," *NYT*, June 29, 2008.
  45. Samuel Tankoos obit., *NYT*, Feb. 9, 1949, 27.
  46. A 1930 advertisement for this Schrafft's boasted that "you may enjoy to its fullest the goodness of old-

- 
- fashioned home cooking in the atmosphere of 1930 New York. Here in a restaurant of singular beauty, in a sturdily masculine men's grill, in a brilliant Florentine room or in a chaste Flemish corner you will be served your favorite dishes as you would have them in your own home." Schrafft's, advertisement, *NYT*, Jan. 30, 1930, 8.
47. Schrafft's, advertisement, *NYT*, Feb. 26, 1930, 14.
  48. "Clubwomen to Open Home," *NYT*, May 15, 1932, N3.
  49. Schrafft's, advertisement, *NYT*, Apr. 10, 1936, 4. It was further advertised as "an urban retreat of comfort and distinction... with the air cooled and filtered till you'd swear you were miles from the dust and heat of city streets. Come for a cocktail and stay for dinner." Schrafft's, advertisement, *New Yorker*, July 4, 1936.
  50. Fromm & Sichel was listed in Manhattan address directories at 218 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, apparently this building. Historically, ASCE employed the address 218-222 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street for this property; the building to the east (the former Consolidated Gas Co. building), however, sometimes used the address 212-218 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. "Business Notes," *NYT*, Apr. 10 and Oct. 26, 1946, 41 and 29; Paul Masson, advertisement, *NYT*, Dec. 28, 1948, 11; "Appointed Vice President of Fromm & Sichel, Inc.," *NYT*, Dec. 29, 1948, 29; "Along the Highways and Byways of Finance," *NYT*, June 4, 1950, F3; "Business Notes," *NYT*, June 14, 1956, 50; Alfred Fromm obit., *NYT*, July 8, 1998, B9.
  51. NY County; *Manhattan Address Directories* (1975-80); Lee's Art Shop, advertisement, *NYT*, Dec. 19, 1963, 47; *NYT*, Nov. 12, 2000; "Art Shop's Renovation Reveals Its Architecture," *NYT*, Nov. 24, 2002, J1; "Life is an Art on 57<sup>th</sup> Street," *NYT*, Dec. 20, 2002, E41.
  52. *NYT*, Nov. 12, 2000.
  53. "Arlen Realty Shows Loss," *NYT*, June 15, 1979, D1.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

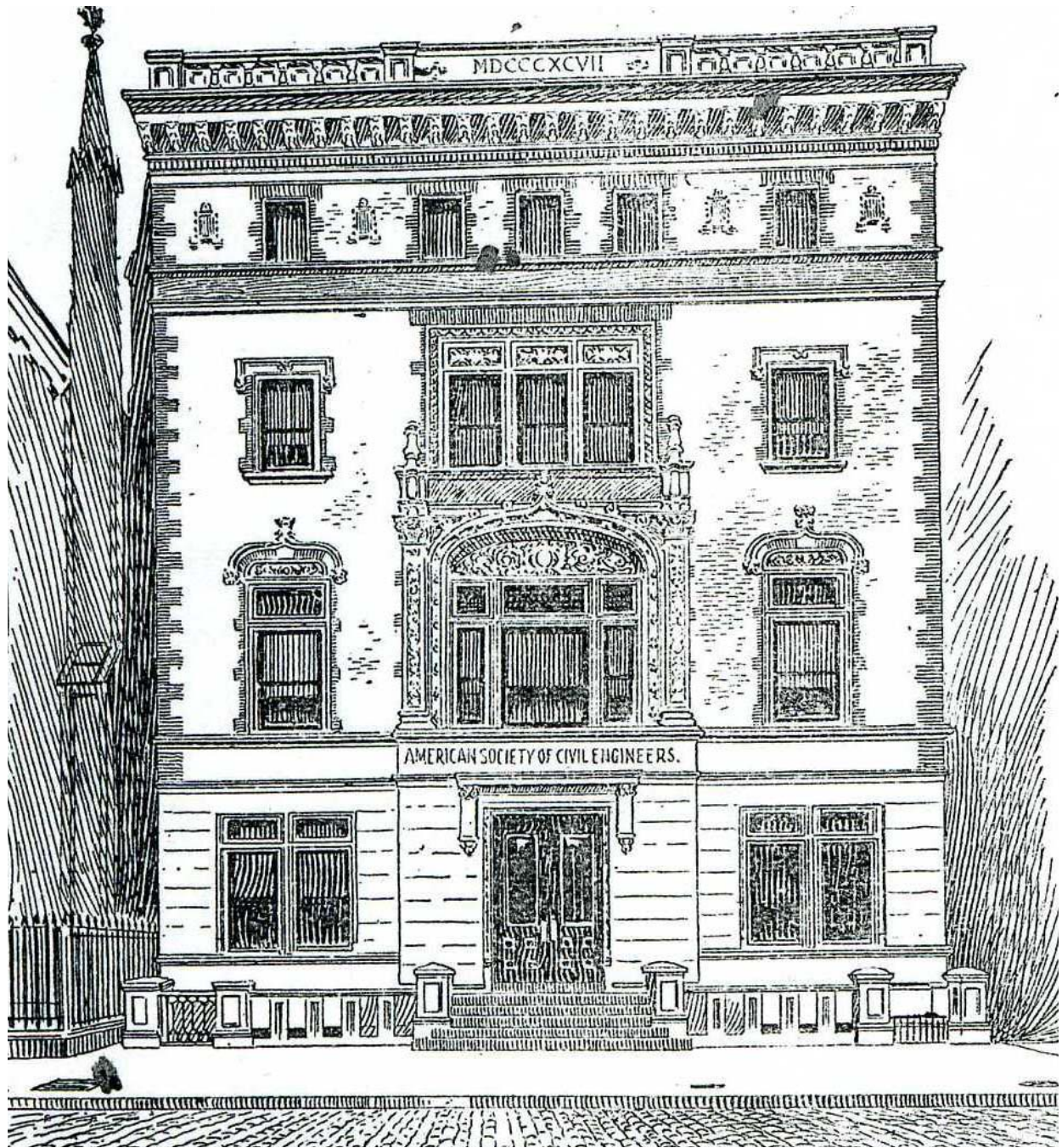
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers, built in 1896-97 and said to be the first such project for a professional American engineering society, was the headquarters of the organization founded in 1852, a new building being necessary as the engineering profession grew rapidly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its membership increased; that after a site was selected on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, the wide cross-town thoroughfare with a distinguished history associated with the arts and various organizations for over a century, a limited design competition was held in 1896 and Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz was selected as architect; that Eidlitz, often linked with commissions from the telephone industry, also produced a wide and distinguished variety of designs for public, institutional, and commercial structures; that the French Renaissance Revival style Society House is clad in white glazed brick, with intricately-carved Indiana limestone ornament, the facade dominated by an enframed elliptical ogee arch on the second story that is surmounted by a tripartite window group, and further embellished by smaller second-story ogee-arched lintels, quoins, and a modillioned cornice topped by a parapet; that, as its attendance increased, ASCE found it necessary to construct an annex in 1905-06, the design by Eidlitz & [Andrew C.] McKenzie continuing that of the original portion; that after ASCE moved in 1917 to new quarters, it retained ownership of the building until 1966, and leased it, due to its close proximity to the “Automobile Row” section of Broadway, in 1918-27 as offices and showrooms of the Ajax Rubber Co., one of the nation’s leading manufacturers of pneumatic tires, and in 1927-28 as a showroom for luxury Stearns-Knight automobiles; that the 1918 ground-story alteration, by architect Arnold W. Brunner, included re-cladding and creation of wide storefront bays; that from 1928 to 1973, this was the location of one of the Schrafft’s chain of restaurants, especially popular in its earlier years as a center for women’s dinners and functions; and that in 1975, the ground story was leased by Lee’s Art Shop, known for its traditional art supplies and operated by Gilbert and Ruth Steinberg, who purchased the building in 1994.

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 the Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers, 220 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 1028, Lot 42, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair; Pablo E. Vengochea, Vice Chair  
Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore,  
Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners





Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers, rendering

Source: *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide*, Dec. 11, 1897





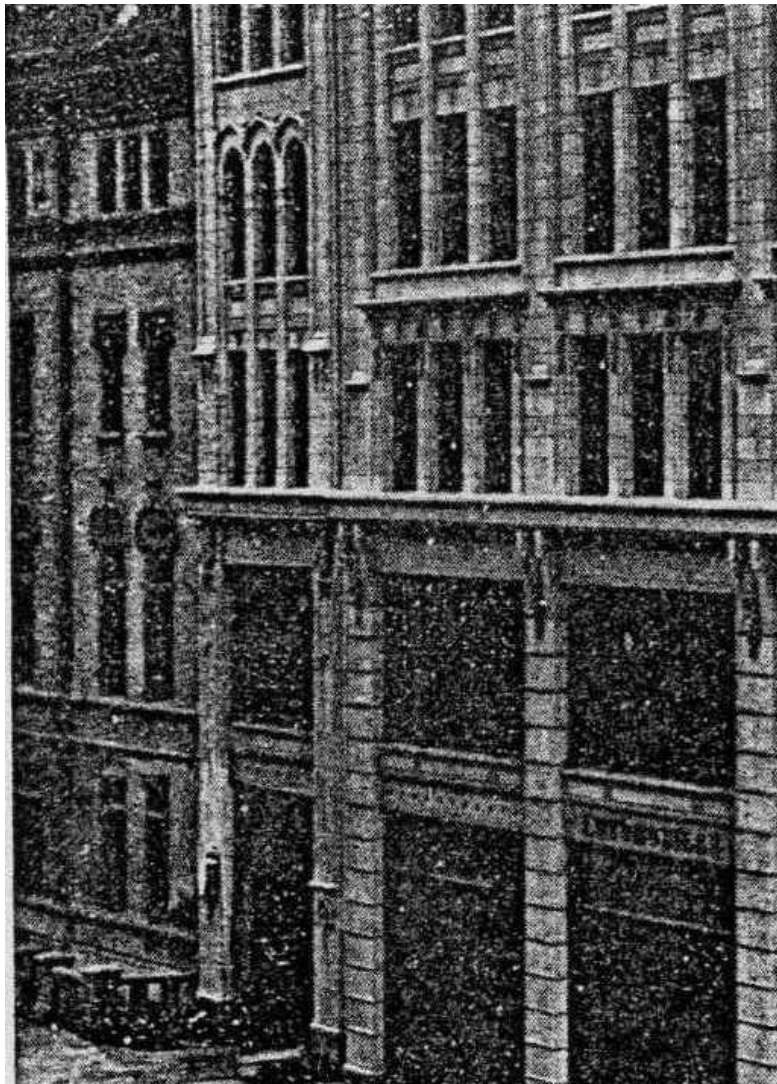
**Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers**

Source: ASCE, *The House of the American Society of Civil Engineers* (1903)



**Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers**

Source: *American Architect & Building News*, Aug. 20, 1898

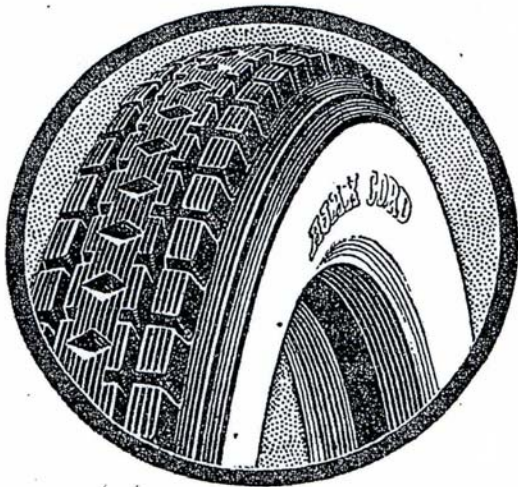


**Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers Annex (left)**

Source: National Terra Cotta Society, *Architectural Terra Cotta, Brochure Series*  
— *the Garage* (1915)



The **AJAX CORD**  
With New Features



**Men. Methods and Mileage**

Satisfaction to the user, we have always put ahead of price. Yet Ajax prices are comparatively low. We have ever striven to make *better* tires—never cheaper ones.

The black tread Ajax Cord, *we know*, breaks every tire record. Rigid comparative tests prove it the last word in tire construction. It is definitely superior both in mileage and in anti-skid security—the tire without a doubt.

These superiorities are due to Ajax men and Ajax methods.

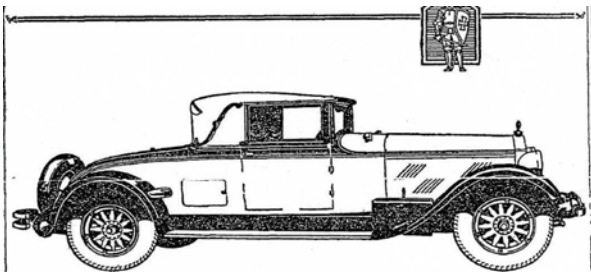
This black tread Ajax Cord is included in the sweeping price reductions which readjustment recently made possible.

Ajax dealers are displaying the black tread Ajax Cord this week. Now is the time to buy.

AJAX RUBBER COMPANY, Inc.  
218-222 West 57th St., New York

Ajax Rubber Co. advertisement

New York Times, July 14, 1921



5 to 85 miles per hour in high . . . 55 miles per hour  
in second . . . More than 100 horse power . . .  
Supreme riding comfort . . . 204 inches of springs  
. . . Custom-built bodies . . . 8 new body styles . . .  
Nine-bearing crankshaft . . . Life of unknown limits.

**Announcement**

Effective July 1, 1927—the New York  
City Sales and Service of the new

**Stearns-Knight**

*America's most Luxurious Motor Car*

will be handled by

**WILLYS-OVERLAND, INC.**

Showrooms  
218 West 57th St.

Service Station  
521 West 57th St.

Your inspection is invited—a demonstration is offered you—of the most luxurious motor car in America. Powered with the famous Knight sleeve-valve motor—the last word in motor perfection and economy. From bumper to bumper you will find that *only* the finest material and parts have been used.

Because of their intimate knowledge of the Knight sleeve-valve motor, as well

as their recognized standing in this territory, we know that both present and future owners will find these new Stearns-Knight representatives fully capable of rendering complete satisfaction in all their dealings.

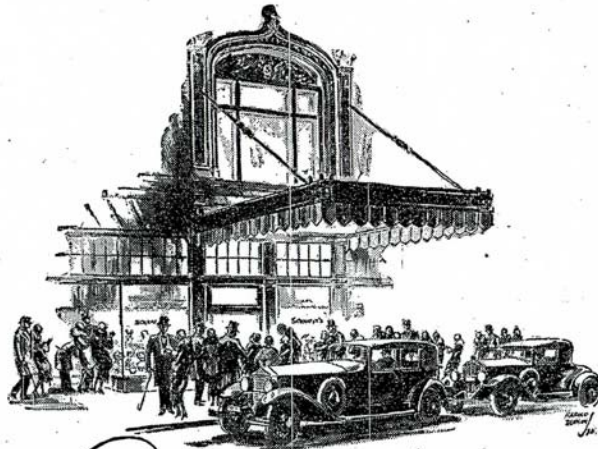
The new Stearns-Knight is now available in 17 body styles—a complete line of six and eight-cylinder

models. Priced from \$3250 upward, at Cleveland.

**THE F. B. STEARNS COMPANY  
CLEVELAND, OHIO**

Stearns-Knight advertisement

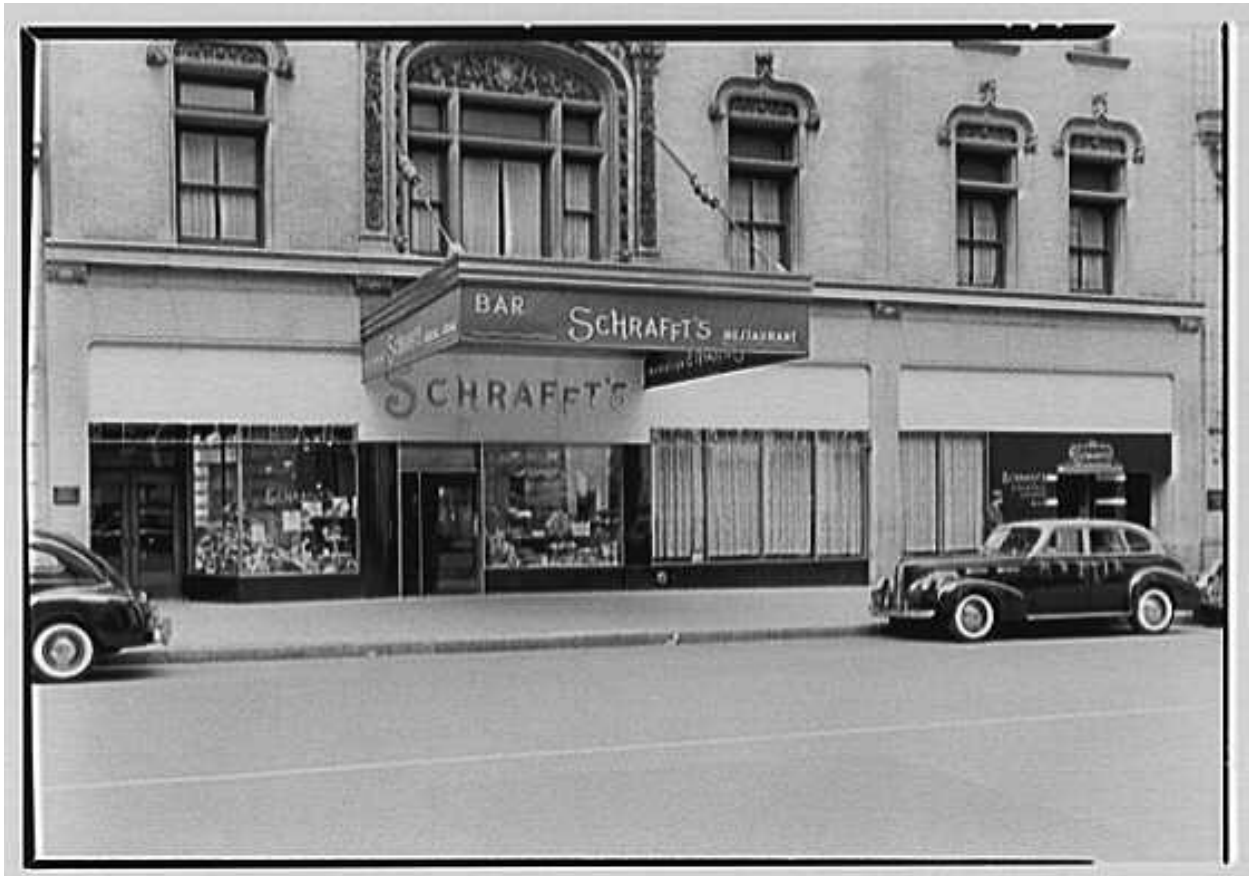
New York Times, July 1, 1927



Schrafft's

57 TH STREET near BROADWAY

*Where modern smartness mingles with old-fashioned good food*



Schrafft's advertisement, *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 1930

**Schrafft's, 220 West 57th Street**

Source: Gottscho-Schleisner Collection (1940), Library of Congress



**Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers**

Photo: LPC (1979)





**Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers**

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee



**Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers**

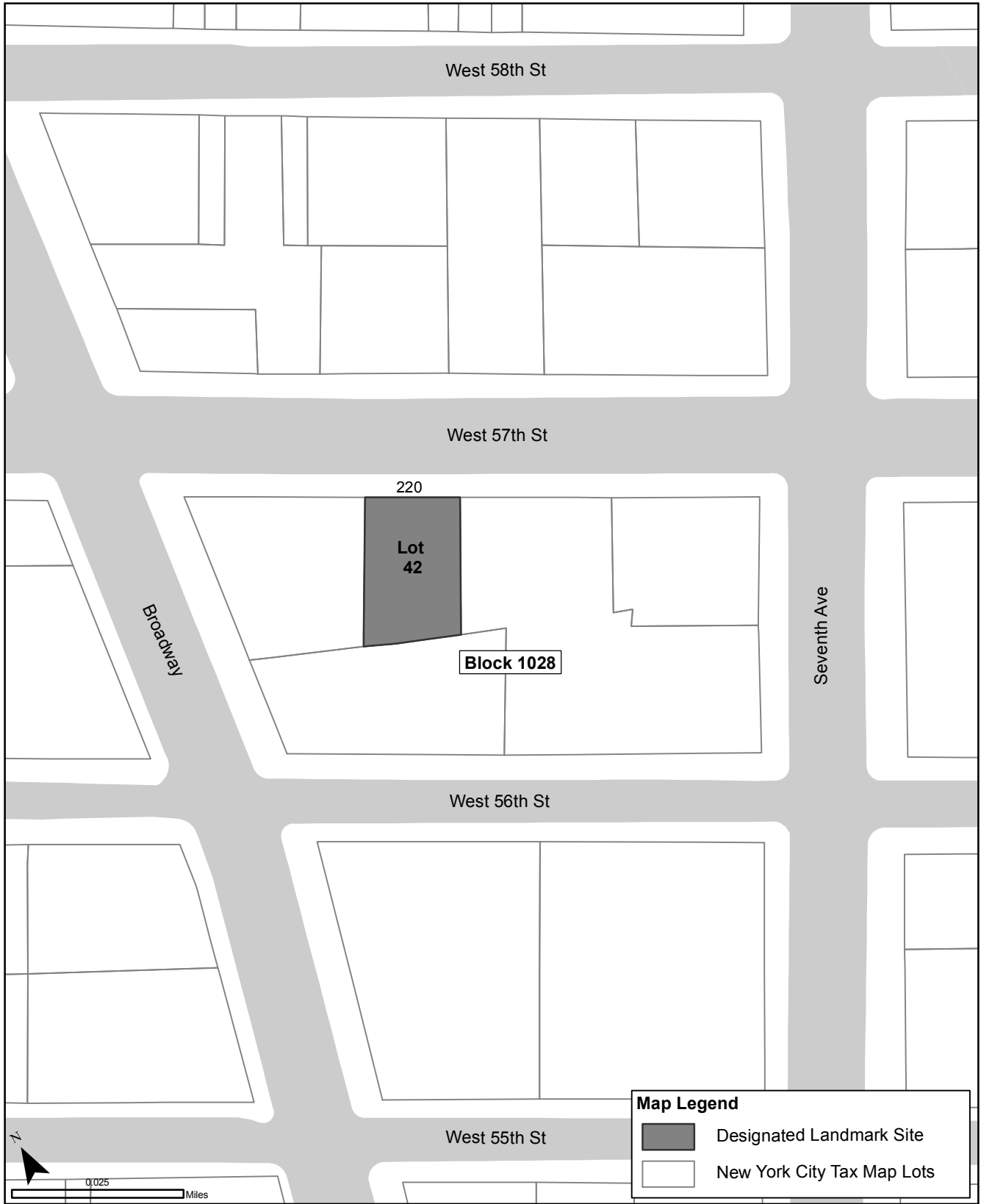
Photo: Carl Forster





**Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers  
Fourth Story, Cornice and Parapet (upper); Second and Third Stories (lower)**

Photos: Carl Forster



SOCIETY HOUSE OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS (LP-2297), 220 West 57th Street.  
 Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1028, Lot 42.

Designated: December 16, 2008