

**PARK ROW BUILDING**, 15 Park Row, aka 13-21 Park Row, 3 Theatre Alley, and 13 Ann Street, Manhattan. Built 1896-99; architect R. H. Robertson.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 90, Lot 4.

On July 14, 1998, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Park Row Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation including representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the Municipal Art Society, and the New York Landmarks Conservancy. A representative of the owner supported designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has also received letters in support of designation.

### Summary

The 30-story, 391-foot-high Park Row Building was the tallest building in New York City and one of the tallest structures in the world between 1899, the year of its completion, and 1908. Located on Park Row across from City Hall Park, the Park Row Building remains, by virtue of its height and twin cupola-topped towers, one of the most distinctive buildings in lower Manhattan. It is one of several surviving late nineteenth-century office towers on a street that became known as Newspaper Row, the center of newspaper publishing in New York City from the 1840s to the 1920s. The building housed the offices of the Associated Press news agency which had been incorporated in New York in 1900, as well as the headquarters of August Belmont's Interborough Rapid Transit Company. The building's architect, R. H. Robertson, who was prominent for his institutional and commercial buildings, designed the Park Row Building using a number of classical elements, including four large sculpted figures set on overscaled brackets, huge columns and pilasters, as well as several projecting ornamental balconies. The two towers that rise above the crowning cornice are capped by ornamented domes which immediately distinguished this structure when it was added to the skyline of New York City at the turn of the century. Early twentieth-century artists admired the shape of the Park Row Building; Alvin Langdon Coburn and Charles Sheeler featured it in their photographs. The building remains in use as a commercial office building.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Park Row: "Newspaper Row"<sup>1</sup>

The area of Park Row, Nassau Street, and Printing House Square,<sup>2</sup> roughly from the Brooklyn Bridge to Ann Street, was the center of newspaper publishing in New York City from the 1840s through the 1920s,<sup>3</sup> while nearby Beekman Street was the location of the downtown printing industry. In the 1870s, tall office buildings, most associated with newspapers, began to replace earlier, smaller structures. Park Row (with its visually advantageous frontage across from City Hall Park) and adjacent Nassau Street was redeveloped with a series of structures that were important for their architecture and for their clients: the Tribune Building (1873-75, Richard M. Hunt, demolished), 154-170 Nassau Street; the Morse Building (1878-80, Silliman & Farnsworth; 1900-02, Bannister & Schell), 140 Nassau Street; the Temple Court Building (1881-83, Silliman & Farnsworth; 1889-90, James Farnsworth, a designated New York City Landmark), 7 Beekman Street; the Potter Building (1883-86, N.G. Starkweather, a designated New York City Landmark), 35-38 Park Row; the New York Times Building (1888-89, George B. Post; 1904-05, Maynicke & Franke, a designated New York City Landmark), 41 Park Row; World (Pulitzer) Building (1889-90, George B. Post, demolished), 53-63 Park Row; Robertson's American Tract Society Building (1894-1895, a designated New York City Landmark), 150 Nassau Street; and his Park Row Building, 15 Park Row.<sup>4</sup>

### Robert Henderson Robertson<sup>5</sup>

A successful and prolific architect, Robert Henry Robertson (1849-1919) employed the popular architectural styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in his designs, which prompted architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler to note that Robertson had "taken part in every one of the successive 'movements' that have agitated American architects in his time."<sup>6</sup> Born in Philadelphia and a graduate of Rutgers College, Robertson received his earliest architectural training in the Philadelphia office of Henry Sims, a designer of country houses and Gothic churches. After moving to New York City, Robertson briefly worked in the offices of George B. Post and Edward T. Potter before opening his own office. In 1875, Robertson formed a partnership with William A. Potter, Edward Potter's younger half brother, which continued until 1881. In the 1880s, Robertson most often employed the Romanesque Revival style, which can be seen in

his first tall building in New York, the seven-story Lincoln Building at 1 Union Square West (1889-90, a designated New York City Landmark). The Lincoln Building was an early attempt at a tall commercial structure, combining metal framing with masonry bearing walls, articulated in stone, brick, and terra cotta with deep, round arches in a Richardsonian-influenced composition. During the 1890s, Robertson continued to follow popular stylistic trends, melding the picturesque Romanesque Revival with more classical features seen in the Renaissance Revival style. These were employed in his early skyscrapers, the eleven-story Corn Exchange Bank, William and Beaver Streets, (1893-94, demolished), and the twenty-story American Tract Society Building (1894-95, a designated New York City Landmark). The architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler praised the numerous picturesque features found in all of these buildings, but thought that Robertson included too many horizontal subdivisions (such as cornices) in his facades.<sup>7</sup> In the Park Row and other buildings, Robertson used a combination of columns and pilasters to emphasize the verticality of these skyscrapers, while adhering to a classical motif. In 1902, Robertson, who remained a friend and colleague of William A. Potter, took in Potter's nephew, Robert B. Potter, as a partner in the firm of Robertson & Potter. The firm was active until 1908, when Robertson invited his own son, Thomas M. Robertson, into the firm of Robertson & Son. This organization continued until the elder Robertson's death in 1919.

Among the many commissions of Robertson's career are several which have become designated New York City Landmarks, including the Lincoln Building (1889-90); the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew (1895-97), West 86th Street and West End Avenue; the former New York Bank for Savings (1896-97), West 14th Street and Eighth Avenue; Fire Engine Co. 55 Station House, 363 Broome Street (1897); and the town house of Moses Allen and Alice Dunning Starr at 5 West 54th Street (1897-99). Others within the boundaries of New York City historic districts include St. Luke's Episcopal Church (1892-95), 285 Convent Avenue, in the Hamilton Heights Historic District; and the MacIntyre Building, 874 Broadway, the Mohawk Building, 160 Fifth Avenue, the Y.W.C.A., 7-11 East 15th Street, and the Margaret Louisa Home, 14-16 East 16th Street, in the Ladies Mile Historic District.

### The New York Skyscraper of the 1890s

During the nineteenth century, commercial buildings in New York City evolved from four-story structures modeled on Italian Renaissance *palazzi* to much taller skyscrapers which challenged designers to fashion an appropriate architectural expression. Between 1870 and 1890, nine- and ten-story buildings transformed the streetscapes of lower Manhattan. During the building boom following the Civil War, building envelopes continued to be articulated largely according to traditional *palazzo* compositions, with mansarded and towered roof profiles. New York's tallest buildings — the seven-and-a-half story Equitable Life Assurance Co. Building (1868-70, Gilman & Kendall and George B. Post) at Broadway and Cedar Street, the ten-story Western Union Building (1872-75, George B. Post) at Broadway and Liberty Street, and the ten-story Tribune Building (1873-75, Richard M. Hunt) on Park Row, all now demolished — incorporated passenger elevators, iron floor beams, and fireproof building materials. Beginning in the later 1870s, tall buildings were characterized by flat roofs and a varied grouping of stories, often using cornices or band courses to form multi-storied arcades on the facades. With the increasing use and refinement of metal framing, as well as improved elevators and fireproofing technology, ever taller buildings could be developed. In 1888-89 New York architect Bradford Lee Gilbert used iron skeleton framing for the first seven stories of the eleven-story Tower Building (demolished) at 50 Broadway.

In 1899, this new technology allowed the Park Row Building's height of 391 feet, or thirty stories, to top the previous record of 315 feet, or twenty-five stories, held by the St. Paul Building (George B. Post, 1895-98, demolished) at Broadway and Ann Street.<sup>8</sup> By 1908, the 612-foot, or forty-seven-story Singer Building (Ernest Flagg, 1906-08, demolished) at Broadway and Liberty Street, surpassed the Park Row Building. At this height, the Singer Building became the first skyscraper to be both the tallest office building and tallest building in the world.<sup>9</sup>

### Park Row Building: History and Construction

The Park Row Building was commissioned by the Park Row Construction Company, a syndicate associated with prominent New York jurist and politician William Mills Ivins, who served in a number of government positions in New York City and State in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and ran unsuccessfully for mayor on the Republican ticket in 1905. Ivins served as counsel to the Park Row Construction Company, and the

property for the Park Row Building was purchased in his name before being transferred to this syndicate. As a result, the Park Row Building was sometimes referred to as the Ivins Syndicate Building. However, the Park Row Construction Company, and its successor, the Park Row Realty Company, were actually controlled by the financier August Belmont, who requested that Ivins "retire" from his position as counsel to the syndicate in 1896 or 1897.<sup>10</sup>

Construction of the Park Row Building officially began on October 20, 1896, and continued through July 20, 1899.<sup>11</sup> Designed to be the tallest structure in New York City, the Park Row Building generated a great deal of attention, with *Scientific American* reporting that the "most notable building now in course of construction is being created on Park Row," and the *Real Estate Record and Guide* proclaiming this to be "one of the largest operations ever undertaken."<sup>12</sup>

When construction of the Park Row Building began, it was noted that the structure would have an "irregular" shape because of the combined configuration of the seven lots that were assembled to form the site of this large building. The *Engineering News* attributed this to the "impossibility of securing some of the [desired] property at any reasonable price," which probably included the lots located adjacent to the rear of the Park Row Building at the intersection of Ann Street and Theatre Alley.<sup>13</sup> To prevent construction of adjacent tall buildings which would block light and air to offices on each side of the building, the Park Row Construction Company purchased the adjoining lots. The *Record and Guide* reacted by asking, "Why build twenty-story structures when space as great as that which the structure occupies itself has to be reserved for low and unenumerative buildings? Would not much the same return in money and a much better architectural result be obtained by putting up an eight or nine-story building over the whole plot?"<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, this was a common practice among developers of tall buildings at the time.

Because of the building's height and irregular configuration, architect R.H. Robertson and engineer Nathaniel Roberts relied upon a number of advanced building techniques in various aspects of its construction.<sup>15</sup> The foundation was carried on approximately 3,900 spruce piles driven into the sand on the site by the same technique used in the construction of Robertson's American Tract Society Building. Concrete was then poured around the tops of the piles, each of which was capped with granite

blocks. Brick piers were built above each pile, then topped with granite capstones to hold the steel grillage beams that run beneath the building. These, in turn, supported the columns that make up the internal structure of this skyscraper. The cellar floor was made level with these granite capstones so as to allow for the inspection and maintenance of the grillage beams.<sup>16</sup> The *Engineering News* noted that "[e]ach [part of the] foundation had to be especially designed for the column loads to be sustained by it, the size of the girders and the size and weight of the grillage beams varying according to location." As for the columns supported by the grillage foundation, "[t]here are practically no two columns of identical section in the entire building, the irregular arrangement [of the building plan] preventing any uniform loading, so that each column has had to be designed and built up for the particular load." The irregular plan also resulted "in a somewhat complicated arrangement of the floor framing."<sup>17</sup>

The construction of the Park Row Building became embroiled in what the *Engineering News* characterized as the "persistent opposition of the Board of Examiners of New York City to the use of concrete fireproof floor systems in office and mercantile buildings of the best class." In the case of the Park Row Building, the ongoing "contest between the manufacturers of concrete floor systems and the Board of Examiners" over this new building technique was at its "fiercest," as the Board denied three separate petitions to use concrete flooring "and absolutely refused to give any reason for its actions." The builders turned to the courts, which compelled the Superintendent of Buildings to make a "pass upon the question of whether the concrete flooring might be used." As a result, in December 1897 the Superintendent approved the use of the Roebling concrete floor system in the building. The Roebling system was the preferred method for fireproofing the Park Row Building because it would be approximately \$20,000 cheaper than a tile floor, and more significantly for this tall building, thirty percent lighter, thereby reducing the load on the foundation by 4,500 tons, and reducing the load on the columns by a considerable amount.<sup>18</sup>

The builders of the Park Row Building also faced the "problem of providing rapid and safe transit to and from the various floors of a building containing some 950 offices, accommodating over 4,000 people, and with a stream of people constantly passing in and out amounting very likely to 20,000 or more a day." In describing the ten passenger elevators installed in an unusual semicircular

arrangement in the Park Row Building by the Sprague Electric Company of New York City, the *Engineering News* noted that with the "4,000 inhabitants of this vertical town," as well as the additional "thousands of people who pass in and out all day," the "transit or elevator problem of this great office building is fairly comparable to handling the surface traffic of a good-sized and enterprising city."<sup>19</sup> The *Real Estate Record and Guide* also compared the Park Row Building to a community, likening it to a "village," and noted that the building's elevators carry "100,000 people a week, and travel about one thousand miles in the same time."<sup>20</sup>

#### Design of the Park Row Building

The Park Row facade is the building's primary one, with the most architectural treatment and design. Although all facades of the building are visible, the sides are of a utilitarian design, with plain brick facing pierced by unadorned windows. Only the narrow Ann Street facade echoes the Park Row facade in its decoration.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the building's unusual twin towers create a distinctive presence on New York's skyline.

The Park Row Building was constructed at a time when architects and architectural critics were searching for what could be perceived as the "proper" style for the ever-enlarging skyscraper. Since early commercial structures had been modelled on the palazzo arrangement, with arcades and a primarily horizontal organization of the facade, many of the early towers continued this architectural orientation. During the mid- to late- 1890s, many architectural critics, including the influential Montgomery Schuyler, promoted the idea that a tall building should be composed as a classical column with a base, shaft and capital. This was a transitional period, with all types of designs found among buildings constructed at the time. The Park Row Building was among the last major New York skyscrapers designed with numerous horizontal divisions, instead of continuous piers (which were perceived as emphasizing the increasing verticality).<sup>22</sup> The facade of the Park Row Building is divided vertically into three sections, with a slightly recessed and more highly ornamented central section bordered by two relatively solid end piers. Horizontally it is divided into six sections which are differentiated by cornices and belt courses. Reflecting the popular style of the time and turning away from his earlier Romanesque designs, Robertson enhanced this structure with classical ornament including pilasters, columns, cornices, and

balconies, as well as four sculpted figures that project from the fourth story of the Park Row facade. These four classical female figures, attributed to the sculptor J. Massey Rhind, represent aspects of commerce.<sup>23</sup>

The problem of artistic skyscraper design was made even more difficult by the irregular arrangement of lots between Park Row, Ann Street, and Theatre Alley, resulting in a building of irregular shape. This irregularity is increased by the creation of light courts which are then spanned in two locations by plain, functional steel girders. The narrow Ann Street facade has ornament which is similar to, although less elaborate than that on the Park Row facade. Otherwise, the building's facades are plain, functional brick walls.

#### Reaction to the Park Row Building

Despite the interest in its height and in its construction, much of the architectural press debated the success of the building's design. Commenting on the Park Row Building, the *Engineering News* believed that it was designed according to "no established style of architecture, but may be classed as that of the 'American skyscraper' style, the great height, narrow width and necessarily flat front or facade of such buildings rendering necessary a special treatment which it is difficult to make effective."<sup>24</sup> The *Real Estate Record and Guide* had a similar opinion, although the writer admitted that if the Park Row Building "were a square tower it might be a very noble object," but its "awkward" configuration kept the building from attaining such status.<sup>25</sup> Writing during the building's first year of construction, architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler conceded that what was then known of the building "does not afford a basis for criticism," but he was a tireless promoter of the idea that tall buildings should be divided vertically into the tripartite division. He thus concluded that none of Robertson's buildings "contributes very distinctly to the solution of the specific problem of the [design of the] tall building."<sup>26</sup>

While the architectural community was critical of Robertson's design for the Park Row Building, the building did have its admirers, including several contemporary artists who felt that the structure was, in the words of the author H.G. Wells, one of the "splendid fountains of habitation" found in New York at the turn of the century.<sup>27</sup> Alvin Langdon Coburn, one of the most influential urban photographers of the early twentieth century,<sup>28</sup> ignored the building's main facade in his photographs of the Park Row Building and

concentrated upon shapes and shadows made by the shear, unadorned brick walls.<sup>29</sup> Similar to the work of Alvin Langdon Coburn, Charles Sheeler's photographs of the Park Row Building "ignored the elaborate, historicizing facade" and "concentrated...upon the side and back ... where the essential structure of the office tower was clearly evident." For Sheeler, "this part of the building, with its irregular grouping of narrow wings joined by steel struts, revealed the heart of the skyscraper, its character reduced to clearly defined prismatic shapes."<sup>30</sup> The Park Row Building figured prominently in several of Sheeler's works, including the film *Manhatta*, which he made with fellow photographer Paul Strand in 1920.

#### Later History

In its early years, the Park Row Building served as the headquarters of Belmont's Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) subway company, formed in 1902 to construct the first subway system in New York City. The Associated Press news agency, incorporated in New York in 1900, also had offices here.<sup>31</sup> By virtue of its highly visible location facing City Hall Park, the Park Row Building has remained desirable for office space, even though it lost the "world's tallest" title just a few years after it opened. The building remains largely unchanged on the exterior, except for a 1930 alteration to the two lowest stories. The present configuration of these floors, with large glass and metal windows and pressed metal spandrels between the floors replaced the original, which featured a central entrance recessed between two large, pedestaled columns *in antis*.<sup>32</sup>

#### Description

The Park Row Building, situated on Park Row between Beekman Street and Ann Street, extends through the block to Theatre Alley with a narrow wing fronting on Ann Street. The principal architectural features of the building are concentrated on the Park Row facade, with a similar secondary facade on the Ann Street wing. The designed facades are faced with granite from the third to the fifth story, and limestone, light-colored brick, and terra cotta from the sixth to the twenty-sixth stories. The two lowest stories were clad in metal and glass during the 1930 alteration. The two towers are faced primarily in light-colored brick, surmounted with large copper domes. The sides and rear of the building are faced entirely with plain red brick (with traces of cream-colored paint), punctuated by window openings. Two angled light courts are visible on the south side of the building,

facing toward Ann Street. Most of the windows have non-historic replacement sash of aluminum and glass.

#### The Park Row Facade

The Park Row facade is divided vertically into three sections. Each side is fashioned as a continuous pier, faced with rusticated stone punctuated by three evenly-spaced window openings at each story. (The lowest four stories have two larger openings in this same space.) Stone voussoirs cap each squared window opening. Between these end piers is a recessed center section, five bays wide; which is emphasized by a series of pilasters, columns, balconies and moldings.

The numerous horizontal divisions of the Park Row facade are delineated by belt courses or projecting cornices. The first horizontal division is located above the first two stories which contain commercial storefronts and large display windows created in 1930. These lowest stories are seven bays wide with the centrally-placed main entrance doorway framed in black polished marble topped by a slightly stepped design. On the western side are three bays with a central doorway centered between two large display windows. The door is a simple, non-historic glass and bronze entrance and is topped by a canvas awning. On the eastern half of the building, the center bay has a similar door, but it is topped by a plain projecting panel. At the easternmost bay is a recess in the building which shelters another entrance. This is fronted by a large marquee suspended from the building. Above the ground story openings are flat black signs and horizontally-placed light fixtures. Between each bay are double-height metal pilasters topped by gilded panels with art deco-type designs. Each of these is capped by two small, torch-like finials. Pressed metal spandrel panels with inset squares, also gilded, fill the area between the two floors while plain display windows are at the second level. An original, double-height stone pilaster capped by egg and dart moldings is located on each side of this facade.

Above the second story is a deeply projecting stone cornice whose underside is adorned with lozenge-shaped designs, and a frieze with rosettes. The next horizontal section is two stories high and is faced with rusticated stone. Four large female figures stand on huge decorated brackets at the third story.

Another, smaller cornice runs above the fourth story, becoming a balustrade with heavy stone

balusters in the center section. Flat paneled stone sections separate the center bays at this level.

Above the fifth story is a large, projecting cornice with a plain frieze. This division extends from the sixth through the tenth stories, with flat pilasters separating the center bays in the seventh through the ninth stories. Small, projecting balconies are located in front of the three windows in the side piers on the tenth story.

At the eleventh story is another cornice which runs across the facade and develops into a rounded, projecting balcony in front of the center section. From the eleventh through the thirteenth stories, and again from the fourteenth through the sixteenth stories are continuous piers between the bays of the center section. Each set is capped by continuous friezes in this center area. A more highly ornamented frieze is located above the seventeenth story, while the side bays at this level are fronted by narrow balconies. Other continuous piers extend from the eighteenth through the twenty-first stories in the center area. Another projecting cornice extends across the entire facade above the twenty-first story, with a wide frieze in the center section. At the twenty-second story is another curved, projecting balcony at the center section, while rounded columns separate the center bays on floors twenty-three through twenty-six.

A deeply projecting, ornately decorated cornice caps this facade. It, in turn is topped by stone balustrades on each side with a copper entablature above the center section. Above the cornice of the Park Row Building are its two distinctive towers, which sit atop the pier-like sections at the sides of the facade. Each tower is comprised of three fully visible stories, with a fourth story located in the large dome. Circular in shape, the towers are flanked by four solid, octagonal brick piers, each capped by a copper cornice and small dome. (Each dome originally had a figure on top which has been removed.) These piers divide each tower into four sides, each containing three bays which are separated by engaged pilasters. The large tower domes are pierced by copper-trimmed oculus windows and capped by a copper, domed cupola.

#### The Ann Street Facade

The facade of the Ann Street wing of the Park Row Building is only 20 feet wide. The base of the facade is two stories in height, capped with a cornice. An entrance to the building has been closed, and the large window on the second floor has been bricked-up. Above the second story, the Ann Street facade contains three bays on each story.

Ornament on this facade is limited to a belt course between the fifth and sixth stories, and balconies, similar to those on the Park Row facade, that project from the eleventh, eighteenth, and twenty-sixth stories.

#### The Sides and Rear of the Park Row Building

Because of the unusual configuration of the lot and the building, the unadorned brick side and rear walls are highly visible. The north side of the building, which is the largest, contains a number of window openings close to the Park Row facade, but few window openings near the rear of the building at Theatre Alley. The top story of the building, just beneath the towers, has minimal ornamentation in the form of a series of engaged pilasters between blind brick walls. A round, faceted addition for the elevator housing was added above this level in 1940.

The building's south side, visible from Ann Street, consists of a large wall containing window openings, an opening to a light court that is spanned by eight steel struts, and a blank brick wall on the side of the wing of the building on Ann Street. In

contrast, the east side of this wing is punctuated with window openings. The rear of the Park Row Building, where it faces Theatre Alley, is also punctuated with window openings, the lowest of which have metal shutters. Where this part of the building faces Ann Street to the south, it contains a blank wall devoid of windows, and an opening to a light court that is also spanned by eight steel struts. Visible on all parts of the red brick walls are traces of the cream-colored paint that had originally been applied to the brick to make it match the limestone facades of the building on Park Row and Ann Street.

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#### *Notes*

1. This section is based on Gerard Wolfe, *New York: A Guide to the Metropolis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 74-77; Federal Writers' Project, *New York City Guide* (New York: Octagon Bks., 1970), reprint of 1939 edition, 99-100; Edwin Friendly, "Newspapers of Park Row," *Broadway, the Grand Canyon of American Business* (New York: Broadway Assn., 1926), 129-134; *Real Estate Record and Guide* [hereafter *REERG*], 50-52; Andrew S. Dolkart, *Lower Manhattan Architectural Survey Report* (New York: Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, 1988).
2. Printing House Square is located at the northern end of Nassau Street between Park Row and Spruce Street. In 1868, Albert DeGroot, a retired steamboat commander, presented a statue of Benjamin Franklin to the City of New York, as a tribute to New York's printers and press. The statue was erected in Printing House Square in 1872. See Margot Gayle and Michele Cohen, *The Art Commission and Municipal Art Society Guide to Manhattan's Outdoor Sculpture* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1988), 45.
3. Among the more significant structures of the mid-nineteenth century located here were the New York Times Building (1857-58, Thomas R. Jackson, demolished), 41 Park Row, and New York Herald Building (1865-67, Kellum & Son, demolished), Broadway and Ann St. *The New York Times* replaced its building with one designed by George B. Post and built on the same site in 1888-89 (a designated New York City Landmark).
4. The shift of newspapers away from downtown began after the *New York Herald* moved to Herald Square in 1894 and *The New York Times* moved to Longacre Square in 1904, though the *New York Evening Post* constructed a new building in 1906-07 (Robert D. Kohn) at 20 Vesey St. (a designated New York City Landmark), and the majority of newspapers remained downtown through the 1920s.
5. For additional information, see Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (1956; rpt. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970), 516; Sarah Bradford Landau, "Robertson, R.H." *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, ed. Adolf K. Placzek, vol. 3 (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 591; Montgomery Schuyler, "Works of Robert H. Robertson," *Architectural Record*

- 6 (September 1896-June 1897), 184-219; Sarah Bradford Landau, *Edward T. and William A. Potter: American Victorian Architects* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979).
6. Schuyler, 184.
  7. *Ibid.*, 217.
  8. Several different heights have been reported for the Park Row Building, depending upon whether the basement and towers are included in the measurement. The main part of the structure includes twenty-six stories above the basement, and the two towers that rise above the cornice each contain four stories, bringing the number of stories above ground to thirty. The height of the Park Row Building, from ground level to the extreme top of its ornamented towers, is 391 feet. See the diagram of the Park Row Building in Sarah Bradford Landau and Carl W. Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper, 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 255.
  9. The competition for the title of "tallest building" was intense. See Anthony W. Robins, "Top This One: The Continuing Saga of the Tallest Building in the World," *Architectural Record* 175 (January 1987), 56-57.
  10. Memorandum to Accompany Will of William M. Ivins, c. 1896, Ivins Sr. Personal-Legal-Wills-Taxes, William Mills Ivins Papers, Manuscript Collection, New York Public Library; New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Block Indices, and Mortgages, Block 90, Lots 4, 4-1/2, 6, 22-1/2, 25. For further information on Ivins' career in law and politics see Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 5 (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1932), 522-523; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 3 (New York: James T. White & Company, 1943), 10-11.
  11. NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building application 291-1896. The dates are those recorded by the building inspectors.
  12. "The Lofty Buildings of New York City," *Scientific American* 75 (October 10, 1896), 277; "Building in Lower New York City," *RERG* 58 (October 17, 1896), 540.
  13. "The Park Row Building, 30 Stories High: New York City," *Engineering News* 36 (October 8, 1896), 226.
  14. "The Success of the Skyscraper and What it Means," *RERG* November 10, 1900, 618; "New Building for Park Row," *RERG* June 3, 1905, 1220.
  15. Landau and Condit, 252.
  16. "New York's Tallest Office Building," *Carpentry and Building* 20 (September 1898), 216; "The Park Row Building: 30 Stories High: New York City," 226. Although the Department of Buildings records list the depth of the foundation of the Park Row Building as 36 feet, a number of reports place it at 34 feet 4 inches, including "The Tallest Building in New York," *RERG* 57 (June 6, 1896), 972; William H. Birkmire, "The Planning and Construction of High Office Buildings," *Architecture and Building* 25 (December 5, 1896), 267; "New York's Tallest Office Building," 216; "Towns Under a Single Roof: A Common Building Operation," *RERG* 66 (October 27, 1900), 531.
  17. "The Park Row Building: 30 Stories High: New York City," 226-227. Interest within the building community over the use of steel in the Park Row Building led the building's engineer, Nathaniel Roberts, to inform the *Engineering News* that by December 1897, 890 tests had been made to the steel for the structure. Nathaniel Roberts, "Inspection of Steel for a 30-Story Building" [letter to the editor], *Engineering News* 39 (January 27, 1898), 61.
  18. "Hollow Tile Fireproofing in the Park Row Syndicate Building," *Engineering News* 39 (April 14, 1898), 234. The Roebling concrete-arch system of flooring, manufactured by John A. Roebling's Sons of Trenton, New Jersey, used a thin iron or steel sheet shaped into a vault and covered with concrete. This method of laying floors was both lightweight and fireproof. See Landau and Condit, 252.
  19. "The Elevator Equipment of the Ivins Syndicate Building, Park Row, New York," *Engineering News* 40 (April 27, 1899), 273. McKim, Mead & White used a similar elevator arrangement in the New York Life Insurance Company Building (1894-99), 346 Broadway, although that building was only thirteen stories high.
  20. "Towns Under a Single Roof: A Common Building Operation," 531.



21. According to Robert A. M. Stern, this building gives the effect of "an infill building," meant to be flanked by others of similar height to create a consistent street wall," even though this was clearly not the situation the architect was planning for in this design. Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Massengale, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 147.
22. Winston Weisman, "A New View of Skyscraper History," *The Rise of an American Architecture*, ed. Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 136.
23. Dolkart.
24. "The Park Row Building: 30 Stories High: New York City," 228.
25. The writer in the *Real Estate Record & Guide* was particularly bothered by the unadorned brick walls which he felt were "left to take care of themselves." This writer also found fault with the numerous horizontal subdivisions of the Park Row facade, calling the result confusing and without unity. "The Park Row," *RERG* (August 27, 1898), 287-288.
26. Schuyler, 216-17.
27. H.G. Wells, "Foreword" in Alvin Langdon Coburn, *New York* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1910), 9.
28. Merrill Schleier, *The Skyscraper in American Art, 1890-1931* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 48.
29. Erica E. Hirshler, "The 'New New York' and the Park Row Building: American Artists View an Icon of the Modern Age," *American Art Journal* 21, no.4 (1989), 26, 28. In Schleier's book, Langdon is quoted as saying: "I have made the observer feel the dignity of the architecture with its straight lines practically unornamented." (p.48) Coburn included an image of the Park Row Building in his collection of photographs published in 1910 under the title *New York*, which also depicted architectural monuments such as the Flatiron, Singer, and Metropolitan Life buildings, and the Brooklyn Bridge
30. *Ibid.*, 35.
31. Landau and Condit, 256; *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 60, 592, 809.
32. New York City Department of Buildings, Alteration permit 1602-1930.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Park Row Building 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 30-story, 391-foot Park Row Building was the tallest building in New York City and one of the tallest structures in the world between 1899, the year of its completion, and 1908; that it was built in 1896-99 to the designs of R. H. Robertson, a prolific architect who had worked in a variety of popular styles and who was most prominent for his large commercial buildings in lower Manhattan; that it is one of several surviving late nineteenth-century buildings that formed Newspaper Row, the center of newspaper publishing in New York City from the 1840s to the 1920s; that, among its many tenants, the building housed the offices of the Associated Press news agency, as well as the headquarters of August Belmont's Interborough Rapid Transit Company; that the great height and irregular plan of this building led to the use of innovative construction techniques including a pile and steel-grillage foundation, a Roebling concrete floor system for fireproofing, and Sprague Electric elevators to transport the thousands of people using the building each day; that Robertson concentrated his design efforts on the Park Row facade of this building, using classical pilasters, columns, cornices, and projecting ornamental balconies, as well as four large sculpted figures by J. Massey Rhind to create a striking composition; that Robertson's efforts represent a transitional period in New York skyscraper design when architects and critics were searching for the proper way to express tall buildings; that its two unique, domed towers and its prominent location on Park Row across from City Hall Park continue to make this structure one of the most distinctive buildings in the area; and that early twentieth-century artists admired the shape of the Park Row Building, and Alvin Langdon Coburn and Charles Sheeler featured it in their photographs.

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 Park Row Building, 15 Park Row, aka 13-21 Park Row, 3 Theatre Alley, and 13 Ann Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 90, Lot 4, as its Landmark Site.



Park Row Building  
15 Park Row, Manhattan  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Park Row Building  
west facade, view from Broadway and Ann Street  
*Photo: Carl Forster*

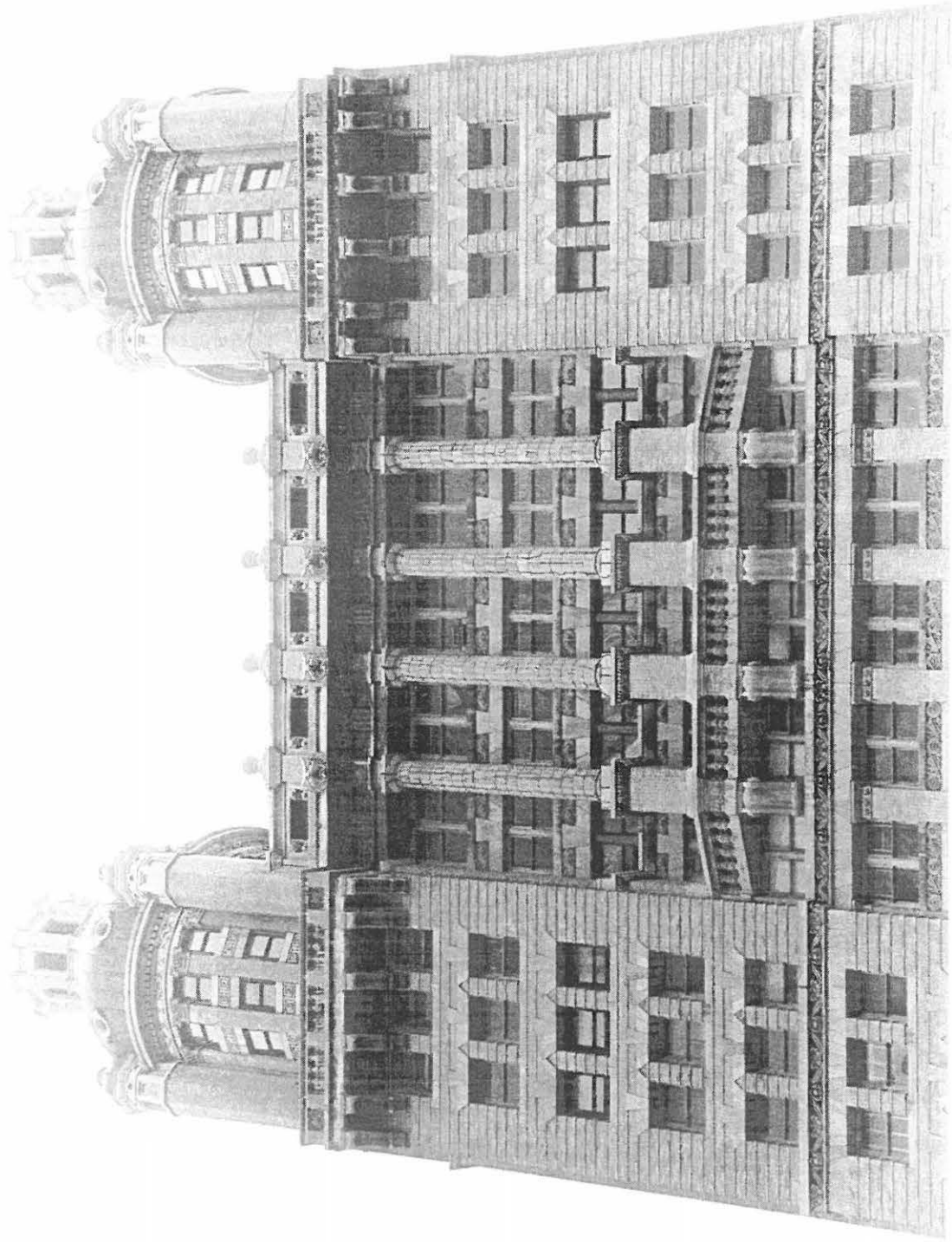


Park Row Building  
rear and side facade, view from Ann Street  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Park Row Building  
base

Photo: Carl Forster



Park Row Building

top

*Photo: Carl Forster*



Park Row Building  
south tower  
*Photo: Carl Forster*





Park Row Building  
roof-top addition, north tower  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Park Row Building, detail  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



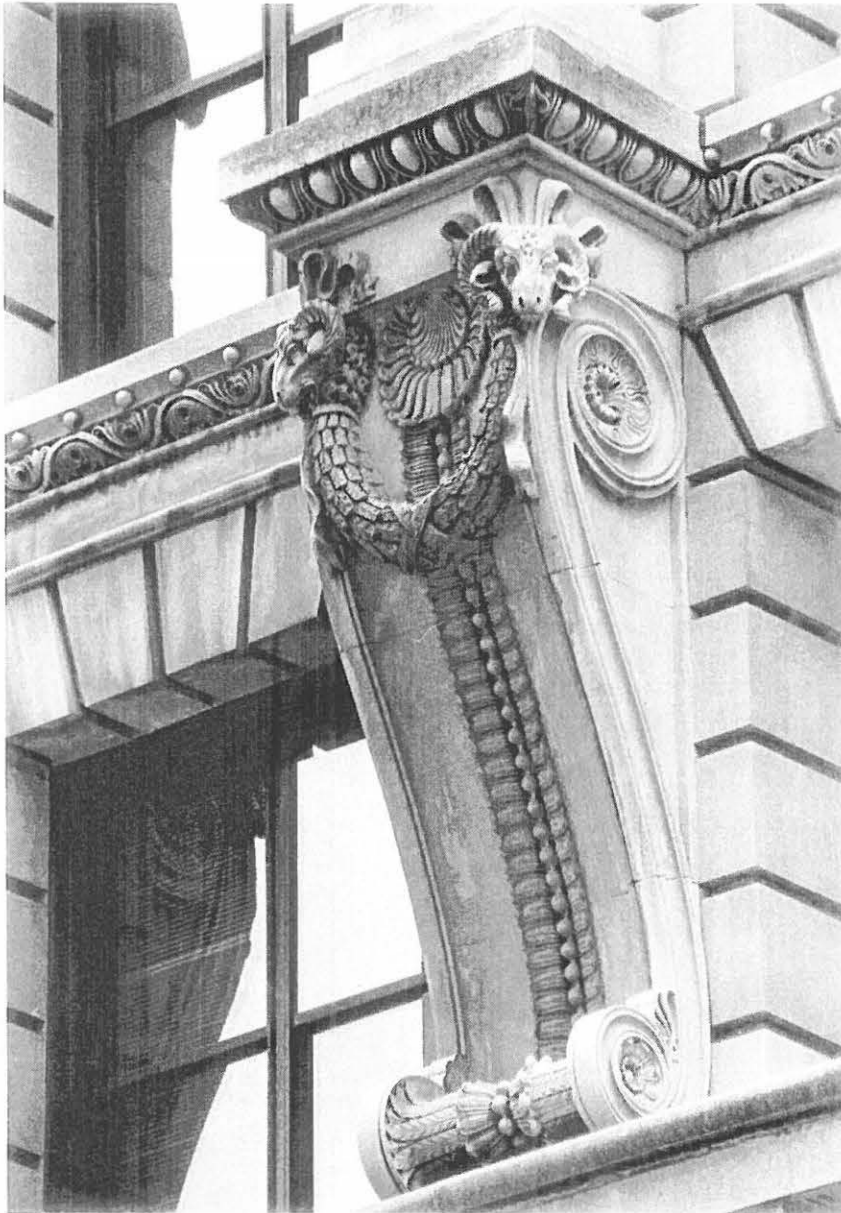
Park Row Building, detail  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



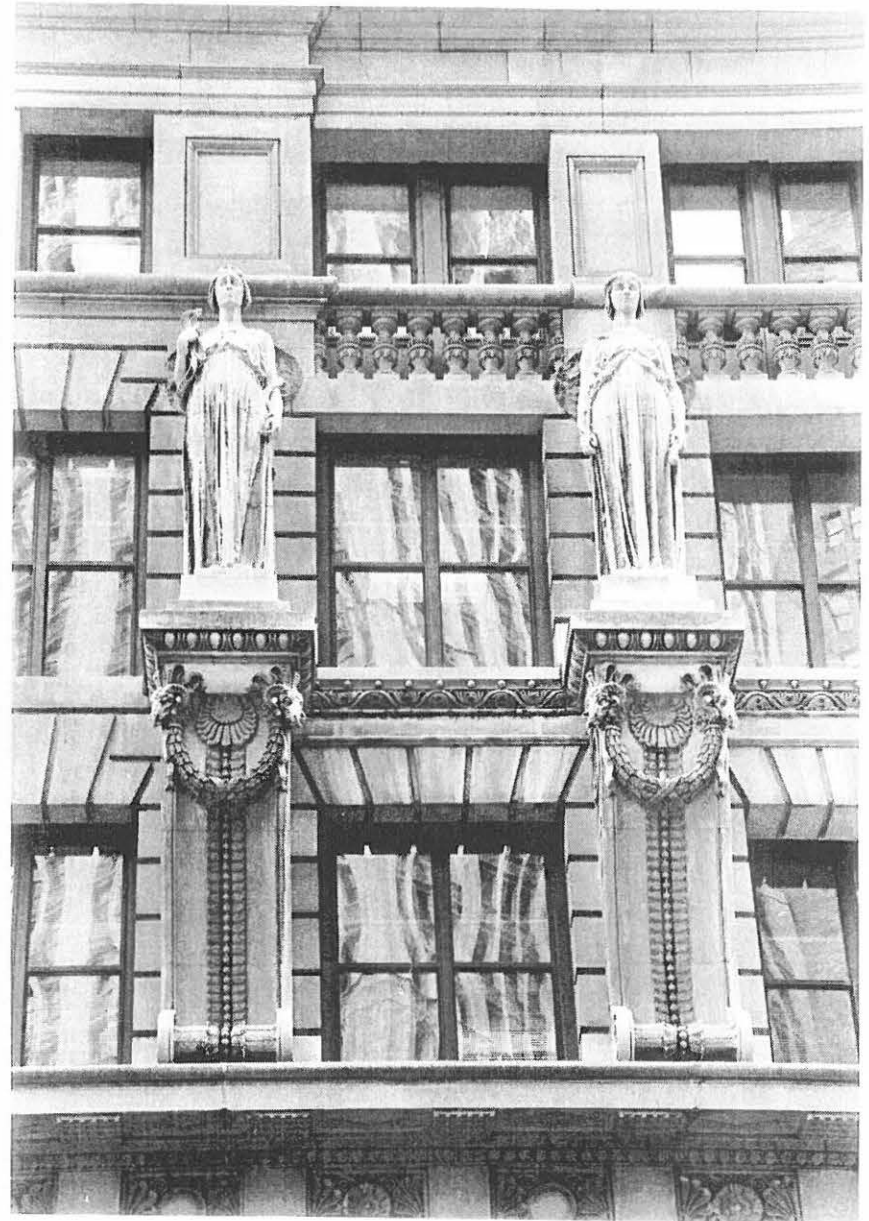
Park Row Building, detail  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Park Row Building, detail  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Park Row Building, detail  
*Photo: Carl Forster*

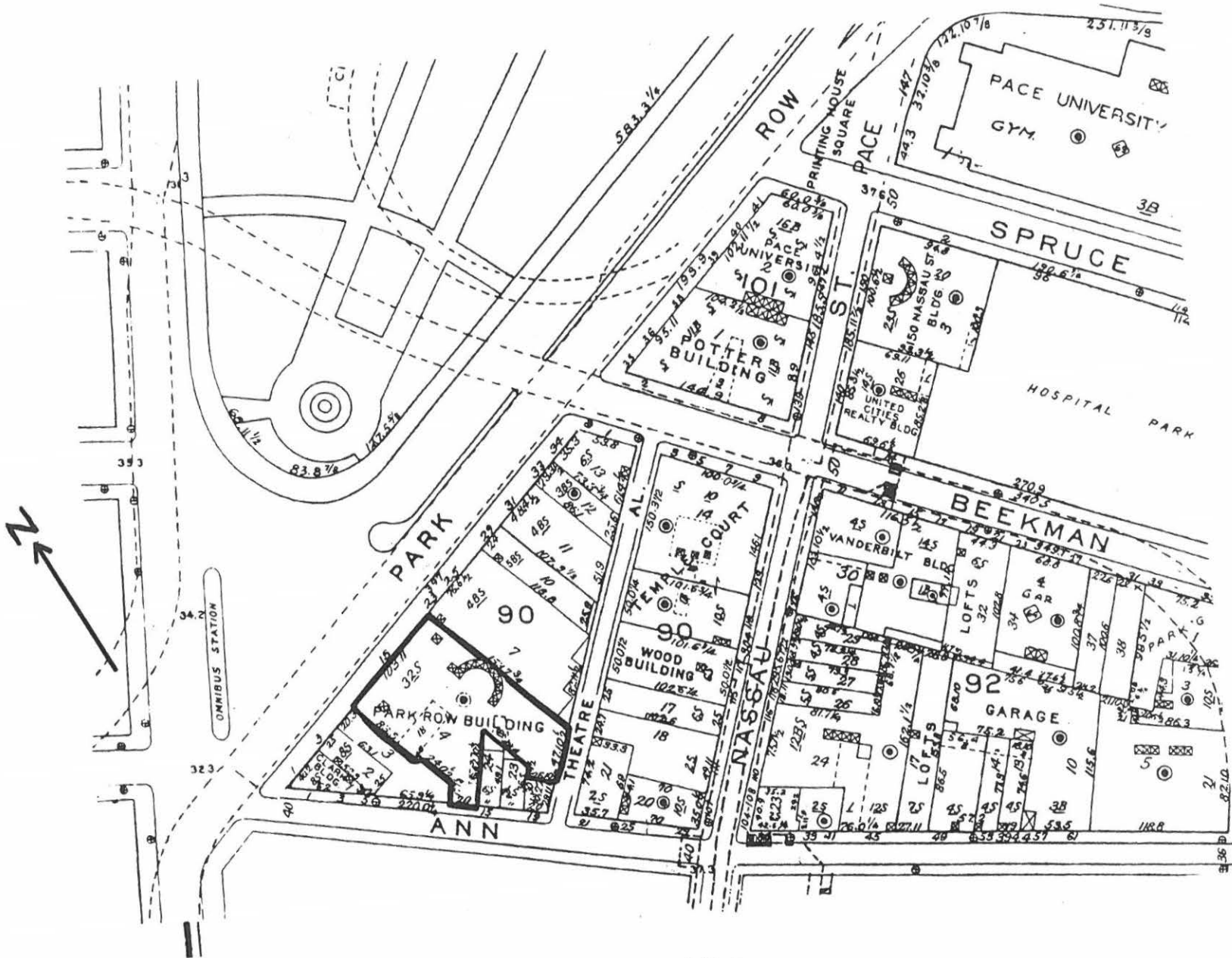


Park Row Building, detail  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Park Row Building  
Theatre Alley entrance  
*Photo: Carl Forster*





Park Row Building  
 15 Park Row, Manhattan  
 Landmark Site; Borough of Manhattan Tax Map 90, Lot 4  
 Source: Sanborn Manhattan Landbook, 1998-99, plate 6

