

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
February 10, 1998, Designation List 289  
LP-1967

**TEMPLE COURT BUILDING and ANNEX**, 3-9 Beekman Street (aka 119-133 Nassau Street and 10 Theatre Alley), Manhattan. Built 1881-83, [Benjamin, Jr.] Silliman & [James M.] Farnsworth, architects; Annex built 1889-90, James M. Farnsworth, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 90, Lot 14.

On October 21, 1997, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Temple Court Building and Annex and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 4).<sup>1</sup> The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Seven speakers, including three representatives of the owner, as well as representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Municipal Art Society, and Historic Districts Council, spoke in favor of designation. In addition, the Commission has received a resolution from Community Board 1 and letters from the Friends of Terra Cotta and the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America in support of designation.

### Summary

The Temple Court Building and Annex consists of two connected structures on the designated Landmark Site. The nine-story (ten stories in certain portions) Temple Court Building was commissioned by Eugene Kelly, an Irish-American multi-millionaire-merchant-banker, and built in 1881-83 to the design of architects Silliman & Farnsworth. Executed in red Philadelphia brick, tan Dorchester stone, and terra cotta above a two-story granite base, the handsome vertically-expressed design employs Queen Anne, neo-Grec, and Renaissance Revival motifs. Today, Temple Court is the earliest surviving, essentially unaltered, tall "fireproof" New York office building of the period prior to the full development of the skyscraper. Furthermore, it is an early example of the use of brick and terra cotta for the exterior cladding of tall office buildings in the 1870s and 80s, as well as a rare surviving office building of its era constructed around a full-height interior skylighted atrium. Its two towers foreshadow the pyramidal form that later became popular for skyscrapers. The Annex to the building, clad in Irish limestone on its principal, Nassau Street facade, was constructed for Kelly in 1889-90 to the design of James Farnsworth, in an arcaded Romanesque Revival style that complements the original building. Temple Court's significance is enhanced by its visibility as it rises above the low buildings of Park Row facing City Hall Park, its prominent towers, and its articulated facades on three sides.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Eugene Kelly<sup>2</sup>

The Temple Court Building was commissioned by Eugene Kelly in 1881. Born in Ireland and apprenticed to a draper, Kelly (1808-1894) immigrated to New York City around 1835 to work as a clerk for Donnelly & Co., one of New York's foremost drygoods importers. With the Donnellys' assistance, he established a successful drygoods business on his own in Maysville, Ky., and later opened a branch of the Donnelly firm in St. Louis, Mo. Kelly had married Sarah Donnelly, sister of his former employer. After her death, he retired a wealthy man but, swept up in the "gold fever" of 1849, moved to San Francisco in 1850 and helped to found Donohoe, Murphy, Grant & Co.,<sup>3</sup> another drygoods firm. In 1857 he married Margaret Hughes, niece of New York's first archbishop, John J. Hughes. By 1861 Kelly had also helped found two banking houses, Donohoe, Ralston & Co. (known as Donohoe, Kelly & Co. after 1864)<sup>4</sup> in San Francisco, and Eugene Kelly & Co. in New York City, the latter the main focus of Kelly's professional attention upon his return to New York. After the Civil War, Kelly invested in the reconstruction of Southern railroads and was a founder of the Southern Bank of Georgia, in Savannah. His various financial endeavors made him a multi-millionaire, and Kelly served as a director of the Bank of New York, Emigrant Savings Bank, National Park Bank, Lloyd's, and Equitable Life Assurance Society. Active in Democratic and Irish-American politics, as well as numerous civic causes, he was chairman of the state's Electoral Committee (1884); member of the Board of Education for thirteen years; member of the Washington Arch and Statue of Liberty committees; trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; president of the National Federation of America; and treasurer of the Irish Parliamentary Fund. He was also a major philanthropist of Catholic institutions, serving on the committee for the building of St. Patrick's Cathedral<sup>5</sup> (begun by archbishop Hughes), and as a trustee of Seton Hall College, and a founder and trustee of Catholic University in Washington, D.C. After separating from his San Francisco firm in 1890, Kelly retired with an estate estimated at between ten and fifteen million dollars in 1892. Eugene Kelly & Co. was dissolved in 1894, several months prior to his death. The Lady Chapel of St. Patrick's Cathedral (1901-06, Charles T. Matthews), constructed through a memorial donation of his wife and sons, contains the burial vault of Eugene Kelly and other members of the Kelly family.

### The Architects<sup>6</sup>

The firm of Silliman & Farnsworth, architects of the Temple Court Building, practiced from 1876 to 1882. James Mace Farnsworth (dates undetermined) apparently began his career around 1872 and worked as a draftsman with Calvert Vaux by 1873. Benjamin Silliman, Jr. (1848-1901) was the third generation in his direct family line with the same name; his grandfather, considered "the most prominent and influential scientific man in America during the first half of the nineteenth century,"<sup>7</sup> had been a professor of chemistry and natural history at Yale (1802-53), while his father was also a noted professor of chemistry at Yale. Silliman, Jr., graduated from Yale University in 1870, studied architecture for three years in Charlottenburg [Berlin], Germany, and upon his return to the U.S. worked for the firm of Vaux, Withers & Co., where he met Farnsworth. Silliman & Farnsworth obtained a number of prominent office and institutional building commissions, for which they produced designs influenced by the *Rundbogenstil* and the neo-Grec and Queen Anne styles, most executed in red brick and terra cotta. Their widely-praised Morse Building (1878-80), 140 Nassau Street, was an early tall "fireproof" office building (and the location of their office). The firm also designed the Vassar Brothers Laboratory (1879-80, demolished), Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., with a central tower capped by a pyramidal roof; the Orange Music Hall (1880, demolished), Orange, N.J.; a hospital (1880, demolished) at Lexington Avenue and East 52nd Street; two commercial buildings at Nos. 19 and 21 East 17th Street (1881-82);<sup>8</sup> and Temple Court (1881-83).

Farnsworth practiced independently from 1883 to 1897, producing numerous designs for commercial and office buildings and warehouses for prominent builder-developer John Pettit, including additions to the cast-iron Bennett Building<sup>9</sup> in 1890-94. He was responsible for the Singer Building (1886), Pittsburgh, Pa. Farnsworth also designed the Temple Court Annex, built in 1889-90, and maintained his office in Temple Court in 1890-92. Associated with a number of other architects over the years, he worked with Charles E. Miller from 1897 to 1900, then with [J.A. Henry] Flemer & [V. Hugo] Koehler in 1900-01, and as part of Koehler & Farnsworth in 1907-10; he practiced alone until around 1923. Little is known of Silliman's subsequent practice, though he remained listed in New York City directories until around 1900. He moved to Yonkers around 1883, and former colleague George

Martin Huss reminisced after Silliman's death that "I believe [he] built largely in Yonkers."<sup>10</sup>

### The Tall Office Building in New York City in the Early 1880s

During the nineteenth century, commercial buildings in New York City developed from four-story structures modeled on Italian Renaissance *palazzi* to much taller skyscrapers. Made possible by technological advances, tall buildings challenged designers to fashion an appropriate architectural expression. Between 1870 and 1890, nine- and ten-story buildings transformed the streetscapes of lower Manhattan between Bowling Green and City Hall. 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. The period of the late 1870s and 1880s was one of stylistic experimentation in which commercial and office buildings in New York incorporated diverse influences, such as the Queen Anne, Victorian Gothic, Romanesque, and neo-Grec styles, French rationalism, and the German *Rundbogenstil*, under the leadership of such architects as Richard M. Hunt and George B. Post. New York's tallest buildings — including the seven-and-one-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), at 154 Nassau Street, all now demolished — incorporated passenger elevators, iron floor beams, and fireproof building materials. Fireproofing was of paramount concern as office buildings grew taller, and by 1881-82 systems had been devised to "completely fireproof" them.<sup>11</sup> An additional consideration in office building design was to provide maximum light and ventilation, for which contemporary architects devised several solutions. While some tall buildings in New York had open interior light wells or courts, George B. Post is credited as one of the first architects to introduce and popularize major light courts that faced the street.<sup>12</sup> Another variant was the interior court or atrium covered by a skylight. The Temple Court Building utilized the successful design, construction, fireproofing, and planning techniques of these earlier buildings.

### "Newspaper Row": Park Row and Nassau Street<sup>13</sup>

The vicinity of Park Row, Nassau Street, and Printing House Square, roughly from the Brooklyn Bridge to Ann Street, was the center of newspaper

publishing in New York City from the 1840s through the 1920s, while Beekman Street became the center of the downtown printing industry.<sup>14</sup> Beginning in the 1870s, this area was redeveloped with tall office buildings, most associated with the newspapers, and Park Row (with its advantageous frontage across from City Hall Park and the U.S. Post Office) and adjacent Nassau Street acquired a group of important late-nineteenth-century structures: Tribune Building (1873-75, demolished); Morse Building (1878-80; 1900-02); Temple Court Building and Annex (1881-83; 1889-90); Potter Building (1883-86, N.G. Starkweather), 35-38 Park Row;<sup>15</sup> New York Times Building (1888-89, George B. Post; 1904-05, Robert Maynicke), 40 Park Row; World (Pulitzer) Building (1889-90, George B. Post, demolished), 53-63 Park Row; American Tract Society Building (1894-95, R.H. Robertson), 150 Nassau Street; and Park Row Building (1896-99, R.H. Robertson), 15 Park Row.<sup>16</sup>

### Construction and Design of the Temple Court Building<sup>17</sup>

In April 1881, Silliman & Farnsworth filed for the construction of a nine-story (ten stories in certain portions) office building for Eugene Kelly, to be located at the southwest corner of Beekman and Nassau Streets on the lot that Kelly had acquired in 1868 from the National Park Bank, of which he was a director.<sup>18</sup> Both the *New York Times* and the *Real Estate Record & Guide* carried lengthy and detailed descriptions of the proposed \$400,000 structure, to be known as the Kelly Building.<sup>19</sup> According to the *Times*, "it will be one of the finest in the lower part of the City" and was to be "constructed of granite to the third story, above which it will be Philadelphia brick, laid in red mortar, with Dorchester stone trimmings, and terra cotta panels between the windows."<sup>20</sup> Construction began in May under builder Richard Deeves; completion was originally anticipated on May 1, 1882, although a bricklayers strike in 1881 was undoubtedly one factor that contributed to a different outcome.<sup>21</sup>

The Kelly Building was among the first of the major downtown office buildings to be erected after 1879, when recovery began from the financial Panic of 1873. Several notices in the *Record & Guide* during construction of the building indicated the shrewdness of Kelly's investment, as the nature of office buildings and the demand for space downtown changed. In December 1881 the weekly commented that

*the demand for offices is no longer confined to the neighborhood of the Stock, Mining, Cotton and Produce Exchanges. All the great industries which are represented in New York*

are using offices instead of stores, and these last are very profitable. Eugene Kelly paid \$250,000 for the lots on the corner of Nassau and Beekman streets. The building he erected is a very costly one, yet it is said it will net him a profit of 20 per cent, per annum.<sup>22</sup>

This was followed in February 1882 by the statement that

*in no part of the city has there been so great an increase in rents as in the great business centres, especially in the lower part of the island. . . The demand for well-located offices in Broad, Pine, Cedar, Wall and New streets, Exchange place and Broadway below Fulton street, is not only keeping pace, but fast outrunning the accommodations which have been provided, or which are nearing completion. Already many of the offices in the Marquand, Kelly, Mills, and Tribune structures are engaged, and at very fair figures.*<sup>23</sup>

An item in March 1882 indicated that a new name for the Kelly Building had been chosen: "Temple Court is the name of the splendid building just erected. . . by Mr. Eugene Kelly. Persons who wish offices in this splendid building should see Messrs. Ruland & Whiting. . . without delay, as the offices are being rented rapidly. The building is fire-proof, and has all the modern office improvements."<sup>24</sup> And in May 1882 was the further comment that "the *Tribune*, *Times*, Morse buildings and Temple Court are nearer the law courts, and better for lawyers and public offices."<sup>25</sup>

The Temple Court Building was completed in May 1883. Its design reflects the shift from the *palazzo* model for office buildings begun in the 1870s by Richard M. Hunt with the Tribune Building, among others. Temple Court was also one of the early tall office buildings that employed brick and terra-cotta cladding. The location on Beekman and Nassau Streets and Theatre Alley allows for three facades, each of which has a tripartite arrangement with end pavilions. The vertically-expressed design is organized by continuous piers, and the building is arranged horizontally into a base, midsection, and upper section. Articulation of the facades on Beekman and Nassau Streets (and the corner return on Theatre Alley), employing Queen Anne, neo-Grec, and Renaissance Revival motifs, is similar, the walls elaborated by ornamental stone capitals, cornices, bandcourses, corbelling, arches, and terra-cotta panels. (The remainder of the Theatre Alley facade below the roof is more simply articulated.) The building is capped by a two-story slate mansard roof with dormers and has two prominent corner towers

with octagonal pinnacled roofs, intended "to obtain a striking and satisfactory effect making the building appear less high than it really is."<sup>26</sup> The towers foreshadow the pyramidal form that later came to dominate skyscrapers. Temple Court provides an interesting contrast with the slightly earlier Morse Building, by the same architects, and the slightly later Potter Building, all three executed in red brick and terra cotta, at the same intersection of streets.

As built, the interior of Temple Court featured an impressive polychrome atrium entered through the main entrance and adjoining entrance hall on Beekman Street; an open ironwork staircase surrounds the central of three elevators on the south side.<sup>27</sup> More than two hundred feet square, rising nine stories, and covered by a large pyramidal skylight, the atrium has galleries supported by elaborate ornamental iron brackets and lined with iron railings surrounding it on each floor. Gallery floors are laid in encaustic tiles and gallery ceilings are formed by unusual ornamental cast-iron plates. The building's 212 offices were arranged so that they opened onto both the atrium and the exterior. An exterior light well to the south of the staircase provided further light to the interior. Construction of the building was considered "solidly fireproof,"<sup>28</sup> with iron floor beams, and exterior brick walls that varied in thickness from 52 inches in the foundations to 32 inches in the upper walls.

As with most prominent tall buildings of the late nineteenth century in New York, contemporary comment on Temple Court was mixed. While Cornelius Mathews of *The Manhattan. An Illustrated Literary Magazine*, an early tenant, thought the building "stalwart and sumptuous,"<sup>29</sup> the British publication *The Building News* found "its architecture is nondescript, and it is surmounted by two towers, like donkey's ears, on its northern side, which give it a very unfortunate appearance."<sup>30</sup> (Critic Montgomery Schuyler, however, had praised the design, prior to construction, for "that animation in the sky line.")<sup>31</sup> *King's Handbook* in 1892 called it "one of the finest office-buildings in New York. . . an edifice that is creditable in architecture and pleasing in nomenclature. . . a modern building in every sense. . . the quaint towers of Temple Court, with their high pyramidal roofs, are unmistakable land-marks in the heart of New York, and point the way to the scenes of vast and momentous transactions in business and finance."<sup>32</sup> *New York 1895. Illustrated* considered Temple Court "the pioneer among the great office buildings and the beginning of the revolution in these structures,"<sup>33</sup> and *American Architect & Building News* in 1901 called it "a popular and profitable structure."<sup>34</sup> Today, the Temple Court Building is the earliest

surviving (as well as one of the very few surviving), essentially unaltered, tall "fireproof" New York office building of the mid-1870s to mid-1880s, the period prior to the full development of the skyscraper.<sup>35</sup> Its significance is enhanced by the visibility of its location near City Hall Park, its prominent towers, and its three articulated facades. (For discussion of the Annex, see below.)

#### Temple Court, Brick, and Architectural Terra Cotta in New York City<sup>36</sup>

The Temple Court Building is an early example of the use of brick and terra cotta for the exterior cladding of tall office buildings in the 1870s and 80s, a trend seen in such brick structures as the Boreel, Western Union, and Tribune Buildings.<sup>37</sup> As observed in 1881 by Montgomery Schuyler:

*the architects of the present generation found commercial New York an imitation of marble, either in cast-iron or in an actual veneer of white limestone. They are likely to leave it in brick. . . Whatever of interest has since been done in business buildings has been done in baked clay, more and more including the use of terra-cotta as well as of brick. The first of the noteworthy attempts to build in brick alone . . . was Messrs. Silliman and Farnsworth's Morse Building. . .*<sup>38</sup>

While there had been several attempts in the 1850s to employ architectural ornament of terra cotta in New York,<sup>39</sup> it was after the Chicago and Boston fires of 1871 and 1872 that terra cotta began to be used as a significant interior and exterior building material in the United States. Walter Geer noted that "by these fires it was conclusively demonstrated that fire-proof buildings could not be made of unprotected stone or iron, and that only brick and terra-cotta walls were practically fire-proof. This increased use of brick work, and of terra-cotta as a constructive and decorative material in connection with brick work, revived the demand for the manufacture of this material in or near New York."<sup>40</sup> In the 1870s and early 1880s architectural terra cotta was often a color that matched stone (commonly brownstone, buff or red) that could be employed in pleasant juxtaposition with brick, or as a substitute for brownstone. The *Record & Guide* remarked that during this period "terra cotta is most generally used for the trimming and ornamentation of buildings, taking the form of panels, courses, friezes, small tiles, roofing tiles and paving blocks."<sup>41</sup>

George B. Post was the leader in New York City in the use of exterior terra cotta, in his designs for the Braem House (1878-80), Long Island Historical

Society (1878-81), New York Produce Exchange (1881-84), and Mills Building (1881-83). Among the other contemporary architects who employed terra cotta were Kimball & Wisedell, designers of the Casino Theater (1881-82),<sup>42</sup> an early New York building having highly intricate, exotic terra-cotta ornament, and Silliman & Farnsworth. The Morse Building, with terra cotta by the Boston Terra Cotta Co., was then considered the first prominent New York office building to employ exterior terra cotta (though it was used sparingly for architectural details, in conjunction with molded red and black brick).<sup>43</sup> Temple Court was an early and significant building to employ exterior architectural terra cotta, and is today a rare surviving example of a tall New York office building of its era employing exterior brick and terra cotta.

#### The Skylighted Atrium in Nineteenth-Century Buildings

The nineteenth-century interior court or atrium covered by a skylight, a form that evolved in the United States for a variety of building types, allowed for both natural lighting and an enclosed, usually grand and highly decorative, volume of space. Carl Condit, in *American Building Art: The Nineteenth Century*,<sup>44</sup> discussed the American use of the "skylighted interior court, or arcade," which he traced first to the three-story Arcade Building (1827-28, James C. Bucklin & Russell Warren), Providence, R.I. The concept was later "adapted to iron construction in New York in the 1850's" in the five-story uptown A.T. Stewart Store (1859-62, John Kellum, demolished), Broadway and 10th Street. The skylighted atrium became a popular feature for arcades, hotels, libraries, exhibition halls, department stores, and office buildings, often in association with cast-iron framing and decoration. Two significant libraries that featured cast-iron galleries around skylighted courts were the four-story State Department Library (1871-75) in Alfred B. Mullett's State, War and Navy Building, Washington, and the seven-story Peabody Institute Library (1876-78, Edmund G. Lind), Baltimore. The Shillito Store (1878, James W. McLaughlin; altered and court filled in), Cincinnati, had a six-story interior court, while the Model Hall (c. 1878-80, Adolf Cluss & Paul Schulze) of the U.S. Patent Office Building, Washington, consisted of a long two-story skylighted gallery, and the Pension Building (1882-85, Montgomery C. Meigs), Washington, was constructed around a colossal three-and-one-half-story court. In New York City, the New York Produce Exchange (1881-84, George B. Post, demolished), 2 Broadway, and the downtown A.T.

Stewart Store<sup>45</sup> (after its conversion to offices in 1883-84), among other buildings, had skylighted atriums that did not rise the full height of the structure (the courts were open above), a variant exemplified by the Rookery Building (1885-86, Burnham & Root), Chicago. Schuyler mentioned of the eight-story Boreel Building (1878-79, Stephen Decatur Hatch, demolished), 115 Broadway, its "interesting plan, which is a large glazed court upon which the inner offices open."<sup>46</sup> The use of the full-height interior skylighted atrium culminated in the late nineteenth century in such prominent office and commercial buildings as the ten-story Society for Savings Building (1887-90, Burnham & Root; atrium filled in), Cleveland; the thirteen-story Chamber of Commerce Building (1888-89, Edward Baumann & Harris W. Huehl, demolished), Chicago; the twelve-story Guaranty Loan Building (1888-90, Edward T. Mix, demolished), Minneapolis; the five-story Cleveland Arcade (1888-90, John M. Eisenmann & George H. Smith), Cleveland; the nine-story Brown Palace Hotel (1889-92, Frank E. Edbrooke), Denver; the twenty-story Masonic Temple Building (1890-92, Burnham & Root, demolished), Chicago; the eight-story court of the U.S. Post Office (1892-99, Willoughby J. Edbrooke), Washington; and the five-story Bradbury Building (1893, George H. Wyman), Los Angeles. Temple Court is an early and rare surviving example of an office building of its era constructed around an interior skylighted atrium.

#### Construction of the Temple Court Annex<sup>47</sup>

The success of the Temple Court Building led Eugene Kelly to plan an expansion. James Farnsworth filed in January 1889 for the construction of an Annex, on the adjacent lot to the south (at 119-121 Nassau Street) that Kelly had acquired in 1886. Expected to cost \$150,000, the ten-story Annex was originally to be clad in granite, brick, and Dorchester stone, the materials of the original building. An amendment, however, was filed by Farnsworth on March 1, "substituting a new design for front, to be constructed of 'Irish limestone' as per new plans and elevations" and resulting in an estimated cost of about \$200,000.<sup>48</sup> In May, the *Record & Guide* clarified that "the front will be a limestone from Balinasloe, Ireland, and the design will have a tendency toward the Romanesque."<sup>49</sup> Construction by September 1889 was "nearly up to the top floor" and was considered by the *Record & Guide* "a remarkable example of quick work."<sup>50</sup> In February 1890, the *Record & Guide* noted that "the handsome addition to Temple Court. . . is now being rented in single rooms and suites for office purposes. . . The building is certainly one of the best

of the down-town structures."<sup>51</sup> Labor issues, threatening to delay completion, were satisfactorily resolved in the spring of 1890; after a strike was called on the Temple Court Annex due to the contractor's use of non-union masonry workers, Kelly strongly urged the contractor to come to terms with the union, and the building was completed by the target date of May 1.<sup>52</sup> *King's Handbook* in 1892 thought that the front (Nassau Street) Annex facade "presents an attractive and imposing appearance."<sup>53</sup> Running through the block from Nassau Street to Theatre Alley, the Temple Court Annex was framed with iron. The original Buildings Department application indicated that the front and rear walls were to be "carried on girders and columns." Plans were amended to include some plate girders, as well as the notation that "all iron construction will be fireproofed with terra cotta blocks, to make same entirely fireproof."<sup>54</sup>

The Annex suffered a fire, of unknown origin, in April 1893 that destroyed offices on the top four floors. This fire was of great interest to those in construction, due to the fact that it was "the most serious fire which has ever occurred, so far as we recall, in a thoroughly fireproof office building," according to *Engineering News*, and that "there have been so few practical tests of the modern system of fireproof construction that there is much doubt and dispute as to the actual behavior of fireproofing materials when placed in actual use and subjected to the ordeal of a conflagration."<sup>55</sup> The fire was also covered in a front-page article in the *New York Times*.<sup>56</sup> The structure of the Annex and most of the fireproofing remained intact; furthermore, the original building was not damaged.

#### Later History<sup>57</sup>

Throughout its history, Temple Court has housed a wide variety of office and commercial tenants. Among the original tenants were Ruland & Whiting, real estate agents (established in 1867), the Nassau Bank, and *The Manhattan. An Illustrated Literary Magazine*. Other tenants have included lawyers, accountants, publishers, press agents, insurance and advertising agents, architects, business representatives, detectives, unions, organizations, and employment agencies. The trustees of Eugene Kelly's estate in 1907 transferred the Temple Court Building and Annex (located on separate lots until 1961-62) to the Temple Court Co. (Thomas Hughes Kelly, president). Thomas H. Kelly (1865-1933), son of the original owner, was trained as a lawyer but concentrated on the management of the various properties he had inherited, as well as on official corporate and institutional duties.

He was considered "one of the most important lay dignitaries of the Catholic Church in the United States,"<sup>58</sup> according to the *New York Times*, serving as Papal Chamberlain for thirty years. Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank, which held the mortgage, took over the properties in 1942. Conveyed in 1945 to the Wakefield Realty Corp., they were acquired by the Region Holding Corp. (Rubin Shulsky, president) in 1946. The properties were transferred in 1953 to the Larsan Holding Corp./Satmar Realty Corp., another Shulsky interest and still the current owners.

### Description<sup>59</sup>

**TEMPLE COURT BUILDING** (For description of the Annex, see below.)

The nine-story (ten stories in certain portions) building has facades on Beekman Street, Nassau Street, and Theatre Alley. Of fireproofed construction with iron floor beams, it was built around an interior skylighted atrium (now enclosed), with an additional exterior light well on the south side. It is clad in granite on the two-story base, and red Philadelphia brick (originally laid with red mortar), tan Dorchester stone trim, and terra-cotta panels on the upper stories. Much of the building, other than parts of the Theatre Alley facade, has been painted. Articulation on the facades on Beekman and Nassau Streets, as well as part of that on Theatre Alley, is similar, employing Queen Anne, neo-Grec, and Renaissance Revival motifs and ornamental details. The design is arranged horizontally into a base, midsection, and upper section (with mansard roof and towers), and in addition, it has a tripartite arrangement with end pavilions on each facade. The building is vertically expressed with continuous piers. Windows originally had one-over-one double-hung wood sash (some were double windows with a central mullion); most have been replaced by anodized aluminum windows with a variety of configurations.

**Base** The two-story base is clad in granite, that on the piers rockfaced. Each story is capped by a cornice. Second-story windows in the center of the facades on Beekman and Nassau Streets are segmentally arched. All of the ground-story bays of the facades on Beekman and Nassau Streets (except the main entrance) have been converted to shopfronts over the years, and have been altered so that little historic fabric survives. Shopfronts are currently framed in metal, with rolldown gates.

**Base: Beekman Street** The main entrance, located in the central bay, originally had polished red granite columns supporting an entablature bearing the name of

the building, capped by an iron balustrade flanked by pinnacles; in 1949-50 the main entrance was altered with a polished marble surround, metal and glass doors, a transom, and the letters "5 Beekman." The bays flanking the entrance were originally windows; surviving below the cornice in each bay are a paneled band and decorative metal band. The end pavilions were originally tripartite, having a central door flanked by columns and windows with bulkheads and transoms; they were later altered to single bays with a bulkhead, display window, door, and broad sign band (since altered). The easternmost storefront is still framed by original fluted stone pilasters with stylized floral capitals. **Base: Nassau Street** End pavilion bays were originally tripartite, divided by piers. These bays, as well as those of the central section, had paired windows with bulkheads and transoms (the south end undoubtedly had an entrance door to the elevator hall); these bays were later altered in a manner similar to the pavilion bays of the Beekman Street facade (since altered). Surviving below the cornice in the south pavilion bay are a paneled band and decorative metal band.

**Base: Theatre Alley** The northern section has articulation similar to that on Beekman Street. The ground and second stories of the center and southern sections are capped by stone bandcourses. The ground-story bays of these sections are divided by cast-iron piers and have transoms and ornamental iron bulkhead bands. All bays have been filled with cinderblock. The second-story bays of the center and southern sections are divided by cast-iron piers.

**Midsection** The brick midsection consists of the third through the sixth stories. Articulation on the principal facades (and north pavilion of Theatre Alley) is similar, with terra-cotta spandrel panels above the third, fourth, and fifth stories; bandcourses, and stone capitals with a stylized floral design on the piers, on the third, fourth, and fifth stories; windows capped by round arches (with decorative tympana) in the center sections of the fifth story; and a stone cornice capping the sixth story. Most of the Theatre Alley facade is unadorned "Croton-faced" brick, with simple bluestone lintels and sills.

**Upper Section** The upper section consists of the seventh through the tenth stories. The north section of the Theatre Alley facade has articulation similar to that on Beekman and Nassau Streets. The center portion of the two principal facades has paired windows with entablatures on the seventh story (the Theatre Alley facade is capped by a corbelled cornice on the seventh story), surmounted by, on each of the three facades, a two-story slate mansard roof with pedimented dormers (the upper dormers on Nassau Street, all dormers on

Theatre Alley, and the flanking dormers on Beekman Street, are iron). The sections of roof on Beekman and Nassau Streets appear covered with asphalt. The end pavilions have bandcourses and terra-cotta spandrel panels above the seventh and eighth stories; round-arched windows, a subcornice, and cornice on the ninth story; a central pedimented window, and cornice with flared corner projections, on the tenth story of the northern pavilions; and a pediment on the tenth story of the southern pavilions (with a rondel on Nassau Street and corbelling on Theatre Alley).

**Roof** Surviving decorative iron railings cap the mansard roof of the center section of each facade. Two prominent corner towers above the Beekman Street pavilions have octagonal pinnacled roofs, covered with slate and capped by metal finials. The corners of the pavilions are ornamented with pinnacles, and the inner side of each pavilion (except Theatre Alley) is flanked by a chimney. The southern pavilions have gable roofs. The center portion of the building is covered by a large pyramidal skylight with a monitor.

**TEMPLE COURT ANNEX** (119-121 Nassau Street)

The ten-story annex is adjacent to the original building on its south side, extending from Nassau Street to Theatre Alley. Framed with iron, it is C-shaped in plan, with an exterior light well that joins that of the original building. Windows originally had one-over-one double-hung wood sash (some were double windows with a central mullion); most have been replaced by anodized aluminum windows. The Annex has a flat roof, which holds a water tower and four sheds on the south side.

**Nassau Street** The principal facade in the Romanesque Revival style, clad in Irish limestone, is organized into horizontal sections by cornices capping

the second, sixth, and ninth stories. The entrance, originally located in the southern ground-story bay, had a round arch with a surround with columns supporting a pointed-arch; the entrance was converted into a storefront in 1959. All three ground-story bays have been altered a number of times and no historic fabric is visible; most of the ground story is covered with a metal veneer. The southern bay of each upper story (except for the top two) has a rectangular window. The northern two bays of the facade are arranged as superimposed arcades of paired arches (the second story; the third through sixth stories; and seventh through ninth stories). The arches have Romanesque style stone carving and decorative metal spandrel panels and mullions. The southern bay of the ninth story and the entire tenth story have round-arched windows. The facade is terminated on the south end by a pediment with a rondel. In the fire of 1893, "great pieces spalled off"<sup>60</sup> the stone sills of the top four stories, but these were repaired.

**Theatre Alley** The plain brick facade has rectangular windows with simple stone lintels and sills. The ground story has a round-arched secondary entranceway in the southern bay and two rectangular bays capped by an iron beam; these former openings are now filled with cinderblock.

**South Elevation** This unarticulated side elevation has painted stucco over the brick.

Report prepared by  
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Research Department

NOTES

1. A previously advertised hearing (September 16, 1997) was postponed.
2. Kelly obit., *New York Times* [hereafter *NYT*], *New York Herald*, and *New-York Daily Tribune*, Dec. 20, 1894, 13, 10, and 4; "Eugene Kelly," *Dictionary of American Biography* 5 (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1961), 307-308, *Who Was Who in America*, histl. vol. (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co., 1963), 290, and John Delaney, *Dictionary of American Catholic Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 289; Leland Cook, *St. Patrick's Cathedral: A Centennial History* (New York: Quick Fox, 1979); "Kelly to Complete Lady Chapel," *NYT*, Aug. 3, 1930, II, 3.
3. A decade later the firm continued as Murphy, Grant & Co.; it became the West Coast's leading drygoods firm.
4. The firm's other original partners were Joseph A. Donohoe and William Ralston. Ralston left in 1864 to join the firm of D.O. Mills. After 1891, it was the Donohoe-Kelly Banking Co., a joint-stock firm.



5. The St. Patrick's Cathedral complex (1853-88, James Renwick, Jr.), Fifth Avenue and East 50th Street, is a designated NYC Landmark.
6. LPC, *Bennett Building Designation Report* (LP-1937)(New York: City of New York, 1995), prepared by Gale Harris, and *Ladies Mile Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1609)(New York: City of New York, 1989), vol. 2, 1014; Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1840-1900* (New York: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1979); James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (New York: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1989); *Trow's N.Y.C. Directory* (1876-1884); "Benjamin Silliman" [father and grandfather], *Dictionary of American Biography* 9, 160-164; Elizabeth Daniels, *Main to Mudd: An Informal History of Vassar College Buildings* (Poughkeepsie: Vassar Coll., 1987), 24-25; "Vassar Brothers Laboratory...", *American Architecture and Building News* [hereafter *AABN*], May, 29, 1880, 237; "Orange Music Hall...", *AABN*, Aug. 28, 1880, 102; "Private Hospital...", *AABN*, Sept. 4, 1880, 114; "The Morse Building...", *AABN*, Oct. 9, 1880, 174; "The Singer Building...", *Building*, Jan. 2, 1886, 6; Silliman obit., *AABN*, Feb. 16, 1901, 49; George Martin Huss, "Benjamin Silliman: A Correction," *AABN*, Feb. 23, 1901, 63; Sarah B. Landau and Carl Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper, 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1996).
7. "Benjamin Silliman," *DAB*, 160.
8. These buildings are located in the Ladies Mile Historic District.
9. The Bennett Building, 139 Fulton Street, originally built in 1872-73 to the design of Arthur D. Gilman, is a designated NYC Landmark.
10. Huss.
11. While a common method of fireproofing metal joists and beams had been the use of brick arches below and poured concrete above, in the 1870s numerous patent systems for fireproofing were introduced, including that of fire-brickmaker Balthasar Kreisler, who patented a system of flat-arch hollow tiles in 1871 (this system was first employed in New York in the U.S. Post Office in 1872-73).
12. This solution was seen in the Post Building (1880-81, demolished), 16-18 Exchange Place, and Mills Building (1881-83, demolished), 59 Exchange Place, both of which had C-shaped plans. See Winston Weisman, "The Commercial Architecture of George B. Post," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 31 (Oct. 1972), 186-187.
13. 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; Record and Guide, *A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City* (New York: Arno Press, 1967), reprint of 1898 edition, 50-52; Andrew S. Dolkart, *Lower Manhattan Architectural Survey Report* (New York: Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, 1988).
14. Printing House Square is at the northern end of Nassau Street at Park Row and Spruce Street. Among the more significant structures of the mid-nineteenth century located in the vicinity were the New York Times Building (1857-58, Thomas R. Jackson, demolished), 40 Park Row, and New York Herald Building (1865-67, Kellum & Son, demolished), Broadway and Ann Street.
15. The Potter Building is a designated NYC Landmark.
16. 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 Street (a designated NYC Landmark), and the majority of newspapers remained downtown through the 1920s.
17. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; NYC, Dept. of Buildings, Manhattan, Plans, Permits and Dockets (NB 390-1881); Landau and Condit, 116; "The Kelly Building. Details of a Magnificent Business Structure About to be Erected," *NYT*, Apr. 4, 1881, 5; "Out Among the Builders," *Real Estate Record & Guide* [hereafter *REMG*], Apr. 16, 1881, 362; *REMG*, Apr. 23, 1881, 413; Record and Guide; "Building in New York," *Carpentry & Building*, June 1881, 107.

18. This had been the site of a mid-eighteenth-century theater at which the first American performance of *Hamlet* was said to have taken place. Theatre Alley's name recalls the fact that this area had had some of the earliest theaters in New York. Facing the alley was the rear entrance of the Park Theater (1797-98), the city's preeminent theater of the early nineteenth century. Located later on the Temple Court site was Clinton Hall (1830), constructed by the Mercantile Library Association as its first building; the library moved to the Astor Place Opera House in 1854. The National Academy of Design was housed in the Clinton Hotel here in 1831-40. The National Park Bank, chartered in 1856 and one of the country's largest banks, was located from 1857 to 1866 at Beekman Street and Theatre Alley. Moses King, *King's Handbook of New York* (Boston: Moses King, 1892); Federal Writers' Project, 100; John W. Frick, "Theater," *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., 1165-1168; Cornelius Mathews, "Temple Court," *The Manhattan. An Illustrated Literary Magazine* 2 (July-Dec., 1883), 74-77; *NYT*, Apr. 4, 1881.
19. *NYT*, Apr. 4, 1881; *REG*, Apr. 16, 1881.
20. *NYT*, Apr. 4, 1881.
21. Additionally, Temple Court was implicated in the infamous World Building blaze across Beekman Street in January 1882, as cited in the *Fireman's Herald* ["The New Potter Building," *Building* 3 (May 1885), 89] and *History of Architecture and the Building Trades of Greater New York* (New York: Union History Co., 1899), 317.
22. "The Hardware Centre," *REG*, Dec. 31, 1881, 1208.
23. "All About Rents," *REG*, Feb. 11, 1882, 120.
24. "Special Notices," *REG*, Mar. 18, 1882, 246. Though *The Building News*, a British publication, stated that it was "called Temple Court, because designed for lawyers' offices," this has not been corroborated elsewhere. "Sky Building in New York," *The Building News*, Sept. 7, 1883, 363-364.
25. "Real Estate," *REG*, May 20, 1882, 501.
26. *NYT*, Apr. 4, 1881.
27. The atrium was enclosed within walls in 1951-52. The elevator cages apparently survive, encased, while the cabs are non-historic.
28. "Sky Building....," 364.
29. Mathews, 74.
30. "Sky Building....," 364.
31. Montgomery Schuyler, "Recent Building in New York II. Commercial Buildings," *AABN*, Apr. 16, 1881, 183.
32. King, 780.
33. "Our Skyscrapers," *New York 1895. Illustrated* (New York: A.F. Parsons Publg. Co.), 57.
34. Silliman obit.
35. The Bennett Building (1872-73) is essentially of the earlier generation of office buildings and something of an anomaly, clad entirely in cast iron. Among contemporary buildings, there are only the earlier and altered Morse Building; the Potter Building (1883-86); and the rear facade of the Standard Oil Building (1884-85).
36. This section was excerpted, in part, from: LPC, *Potter Building Designation Report* (LP-1948) (New York: City of New York, 1996), prepared by Jay Shockley.
37. *History of Architecture*. . . , 314-315.
38. Schuyler.
39. Historians of terra cotta credit the Trinity Building (1851-53, Richard Upjohn, demolished), 111 Broadway, and the St. Denis Hotel (1853, James Renwick, altered), 797 Broadway, as two of the first structures in New York City to

employ terra cotta for exterior architectural ornament.

40. Walter Geer, *Terra-Cotta in Architecture* (New York: Gazlay Bros., 1891), 20. Advantages seen in terra cotta for both exterior architectural ornament and interior fireproofing included its fireproof properties, strength, durability, lower cost and weight in shipping and handling, the relative ease with which elaborate decoration could be molded, and the retention over time of crisp ornamental profiles compared to stone.
41. "The Use of Terra Cotta in Building," *REG*, Mar. 3, 1883, 85.
42. The Braem House, 15 East 37th Street, and the Casino Theater, 1400 Broadway, were demolished. The Long Island Historical Society (now Brooklyn Historical Society), 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, is located in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District and is a designated NYC Interior Landmark.
43. Most of this terra cotta was destroyed in an alteration and addition to the Morse Building (1900-02, Bannister & Schell).
44. Condit, *American Building Art: The Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), 67-69.
45. The A.T. Stewart Store (later the New York Sun Building from 1919 to 1952) (1845-46, Joseph Trench & Co.; 1850-53, Trench & Snook; 1872, Frederick Schimdt; 1884, Edward D. Harris; 1921), 280 Broadway, is a designated NYC Landmark.
46. Schuyler.
47. NYC, Dept. of Buildings (NB 83-1889); "Buildings Projected," *REG*, Jan. 26, 1889, 127; N.Y. County.
48. NYC, Dept. of Buildings, NB 83-1889 application; "Out Among the Builders," *REG*, Feb. 23, 1889, 245.
49. "Important Buildings Underway," *REG*, May 25, 1889, 728. Contractors for the building were John Kele[h]er, masonry and fireproofing; Post & McCord, ironwork; William Brennan, stonework; and E.F. Haight, carpentry.
50. "Quick Work," *REG*, Sept. 7, 1889, 1208.
51. "Special Notices," *REG*, Feb. 1, 1890, 157.
52. "Special Notices," *REG*, Mar. 29, 1890, 444.
53. King, 780.
54. NB 83-1889 application. The building, with two elevators on the south side, is C-shaped in plan with an exterior light well that joins that of the original building (forming one long rectangular well). The ground story within the well was originally covered by a skylight.
55. "A Serious Blaze in a Fireproof Office Building" and "The Temple Court Fire," *Engineering News & American Railway Journal*, Apr. 6 and 13, 1893, 323 and 356.
56. "Flames in Temple Court," *NYT*, Apr. 3, 1893, 1.
57. N.Y. County; NYC, Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, tax maps; *Trow's N.Y.C. Directory* (1884); *Manhattan Address Directory* (1940-1959); *REG*, July 6, 1907, 16; Feb. 20, 1915, 318; Sept. 12, 1942, 8; Mar. 24, 1945, 5; Apr. 7, 1945, 8; Jan. 19, 1946, 3 and 6; May 28, 1949, 18; Jan. 9, 1954, 6; June 20, 1959, 22; and Sept. 5, 1964, 4; Thomas Kelly obit., *NYT*, Jan. 23, 1933, 13.
58. T. Kelly obit.
59. NYC, Dept. of Buildings; *NYT*, Apr. 4, 1881, 5; *REG*, Apr. 16, 1881, 362.
60. "A Serious Blaze..."

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

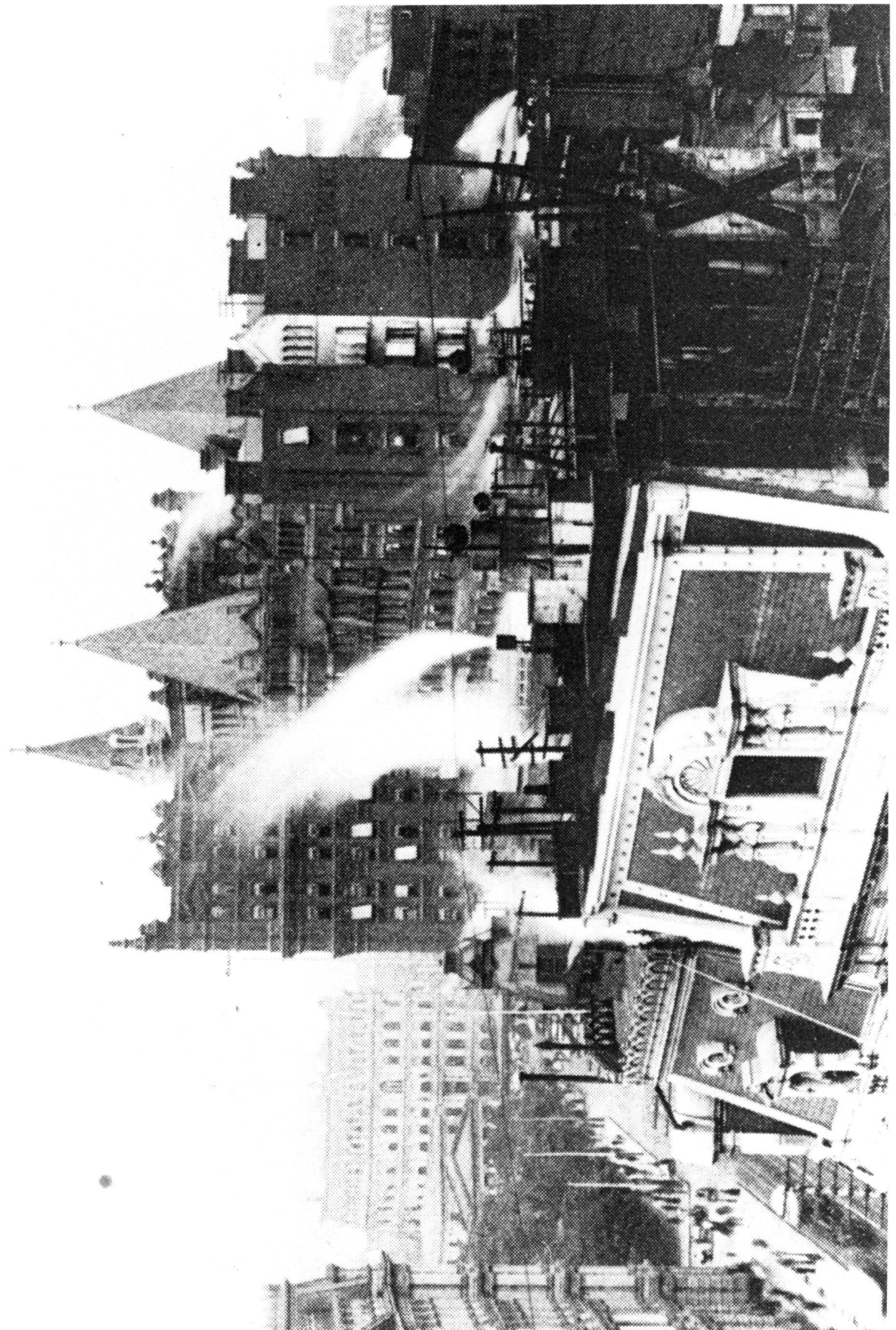
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Temple Court Building and Annex has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development,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

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the nine-story (ten stories in certain portions) Temple Court Building was commissioned by Eugene Kelly, an Irish-American multi-millionaire-merchant-banker, and built in 1881-83 to the design of architects Silliman & Farnsworth; that, executed in red Philadelphia brick, tan Dorchester stone, and terra cotta above a two-story granite base, the handsome vertically-expressed design employs Queen Anne, neo-Grec, and Renaissance Revival motifs; that Temple Court is today the earliest surviving, essentially unaltered, tall "fireproof" New York office building of the period prior to the full development of the skyscraper; that, furthermore, it is an early example of the use of brick and terra cotta for the exterior cladding of tall office buildings in the 1870s and 80s, as well as a rare surviving office building of its era constructed around a full-height interior skylighted atrium, and that its two towers foreshadow the pyramidal form that later became popular for skyscrapers; that the Temple Court Annex, clad in Irish limestone on its principal, Nassau Street facade, was constructed for Kelly in 1889-90 to the design of James Farnsworth, in an arcaded Romanesque Revival style that complements the original building; and that Temple Court's significance is enhanced by its visibility near City Hall Park, its prominent towers, and its articulated facades on three sides.

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 Temple Court Building and Annex, 3-9 Beekman Street (aka 119-133 Nassau Street and 10 Theatre Alley), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 90, Lot 14, as its Landmark Site.



**Rendering of Temple Court Building and Annex**  
Source: *King's Photographic Views of New York* (1895)



**Temple Court Building prior to construction of the Annex (c. 1883-88)**  
Source: New-York Historical Society

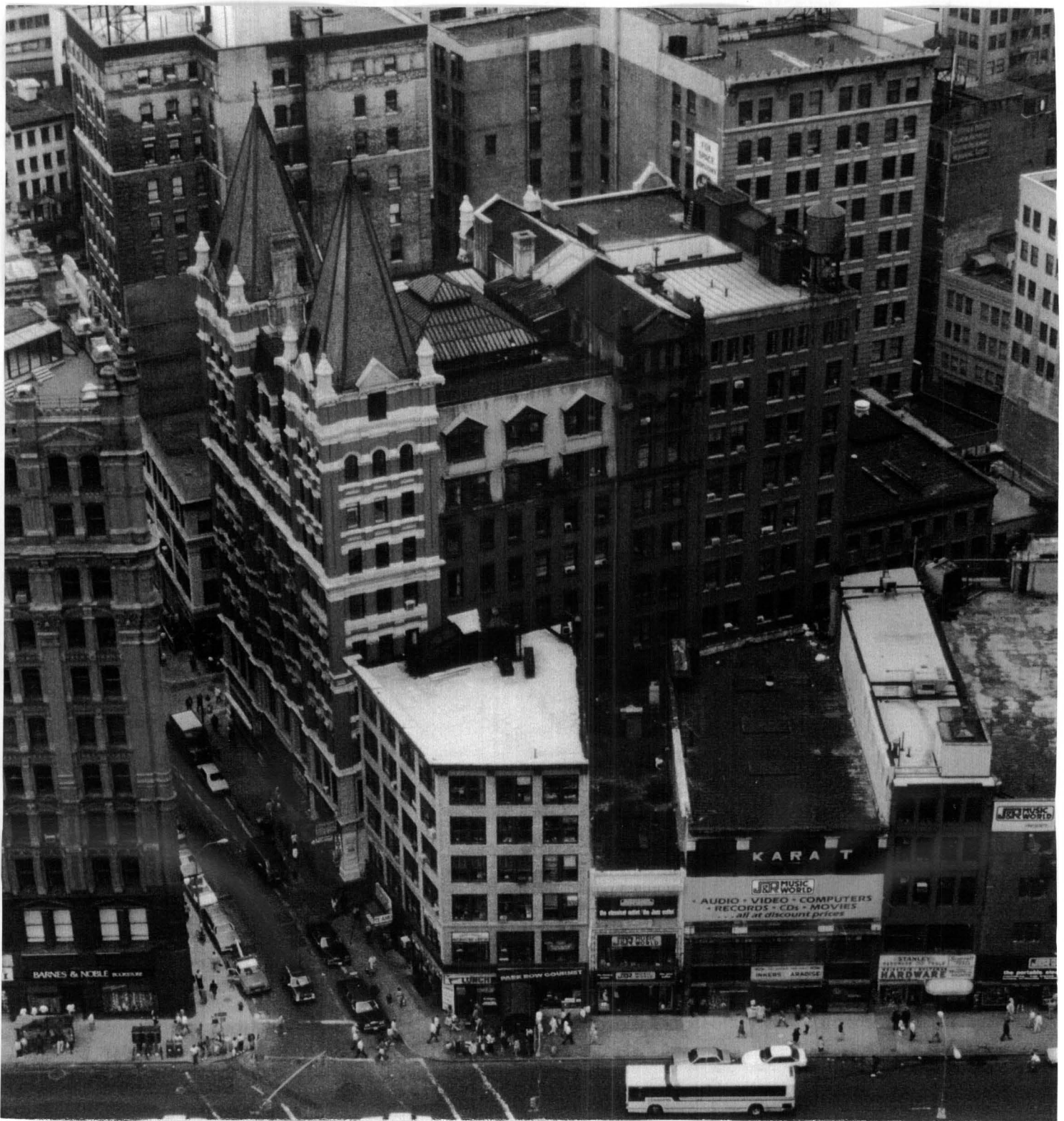


**Temple Court Building** (c. 1940s)  
Source: New-York Historical Society



**Temple Court Building**  
Photo: Carl Forster





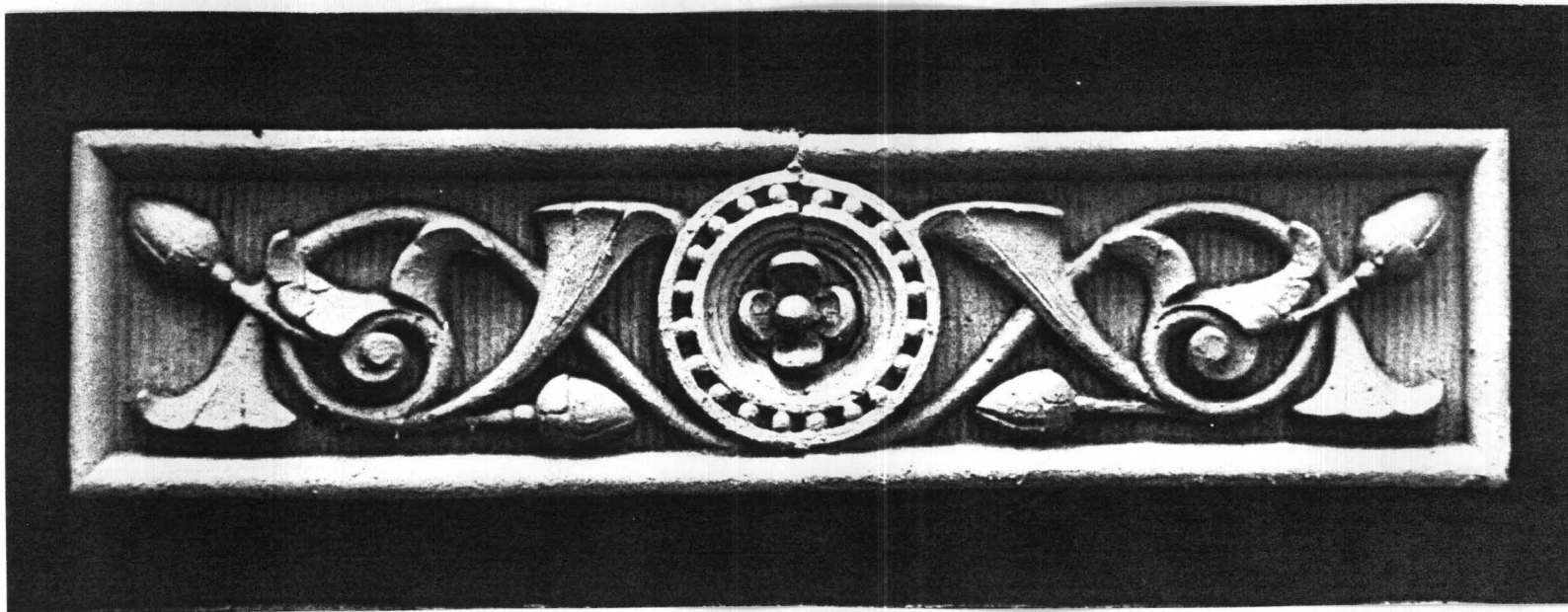
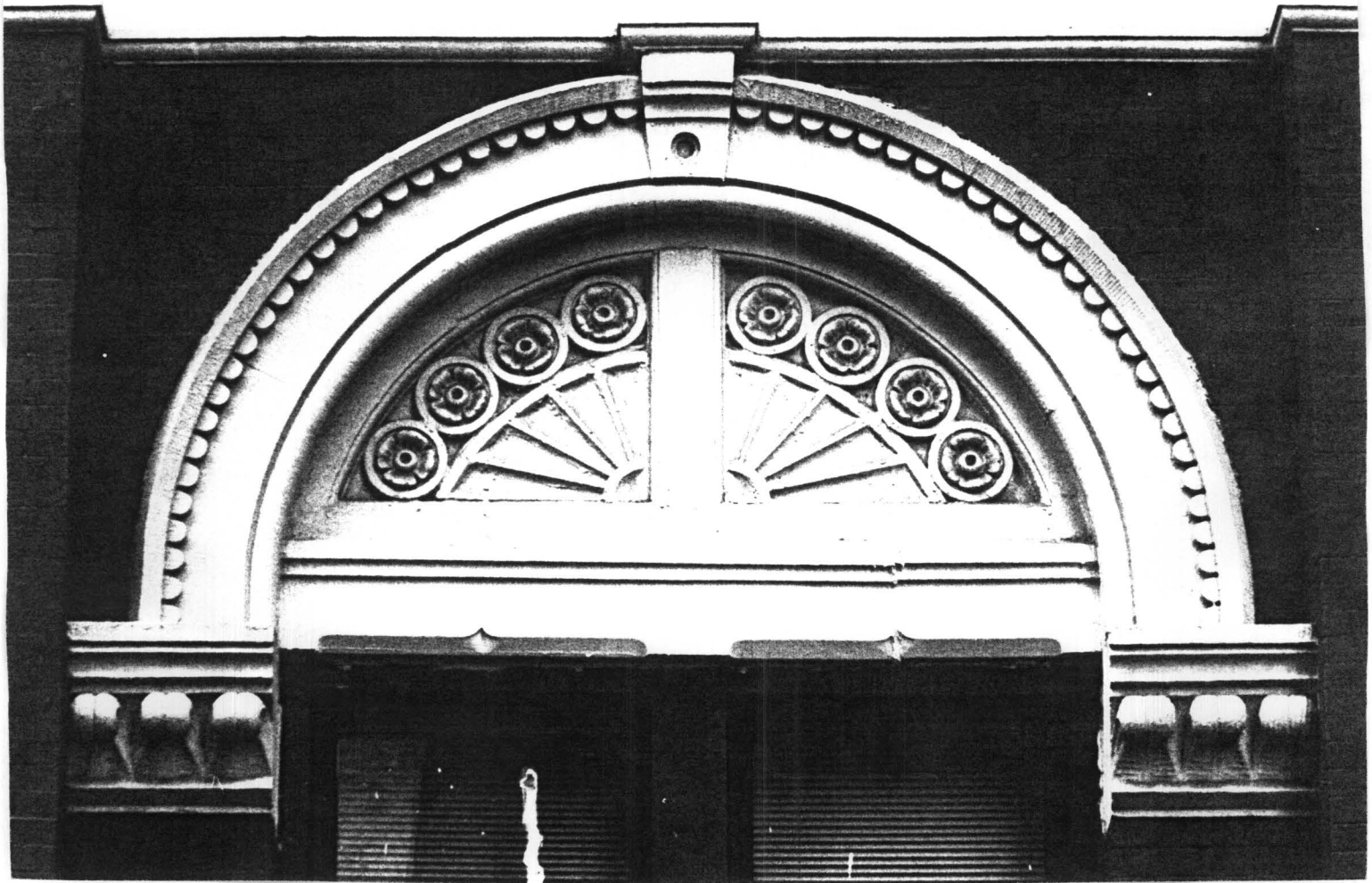
Temple Court Building and Annex  
Photo: **ARCHITECTURE** + *furniture*



**Temple Court Building**  
Photo: Carl Forster



**Temple Court Building**, details  
Photos: Carl Forster



Temple Court Building, Details  
Photos: **ARCHITECTURE** + *furniture*



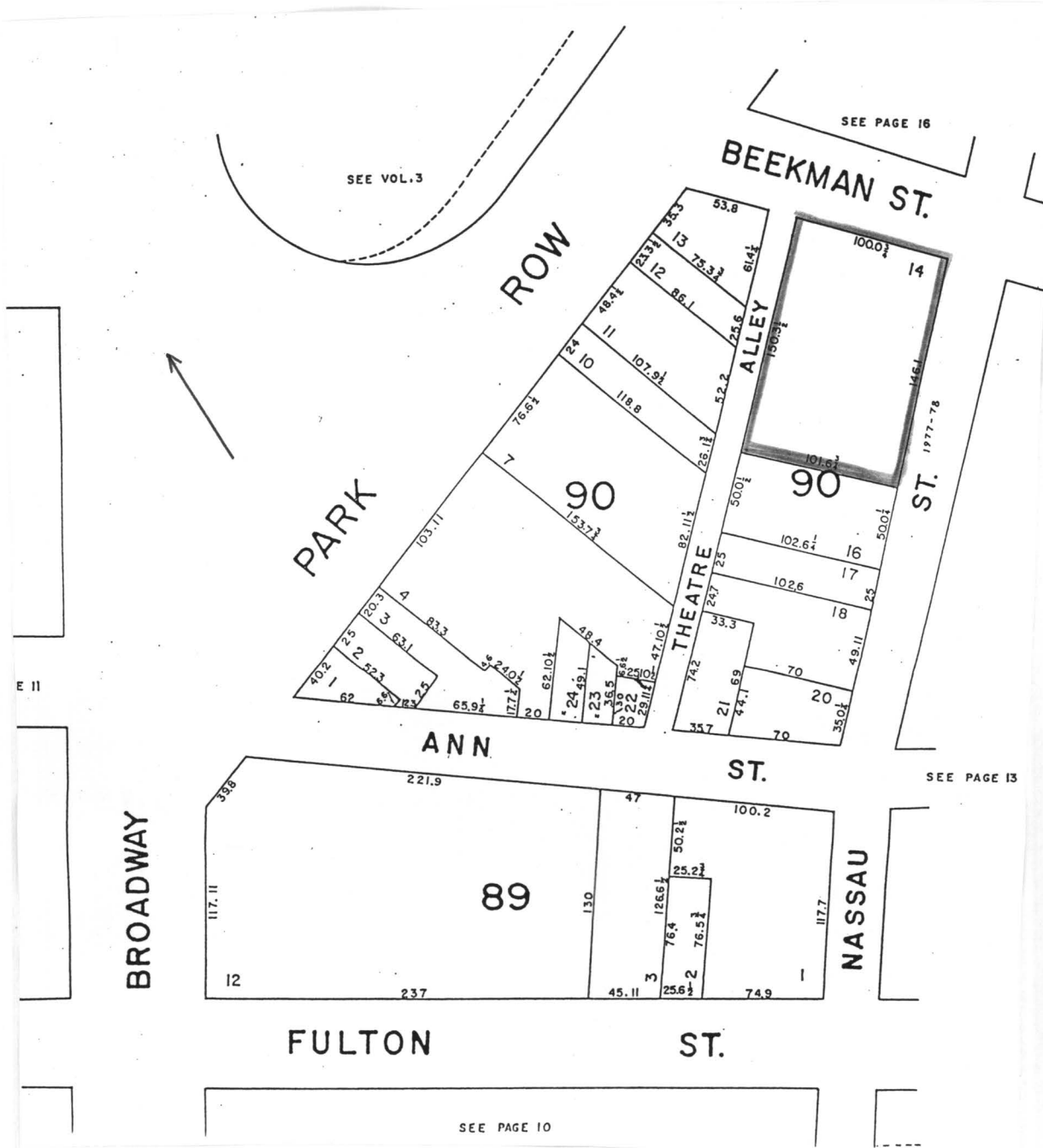
Temple Court Building, Roof Detail  
Photo: **ARCHITECTURE** + *furniture*



Temple Court Annex  
Photo: Carl Forster

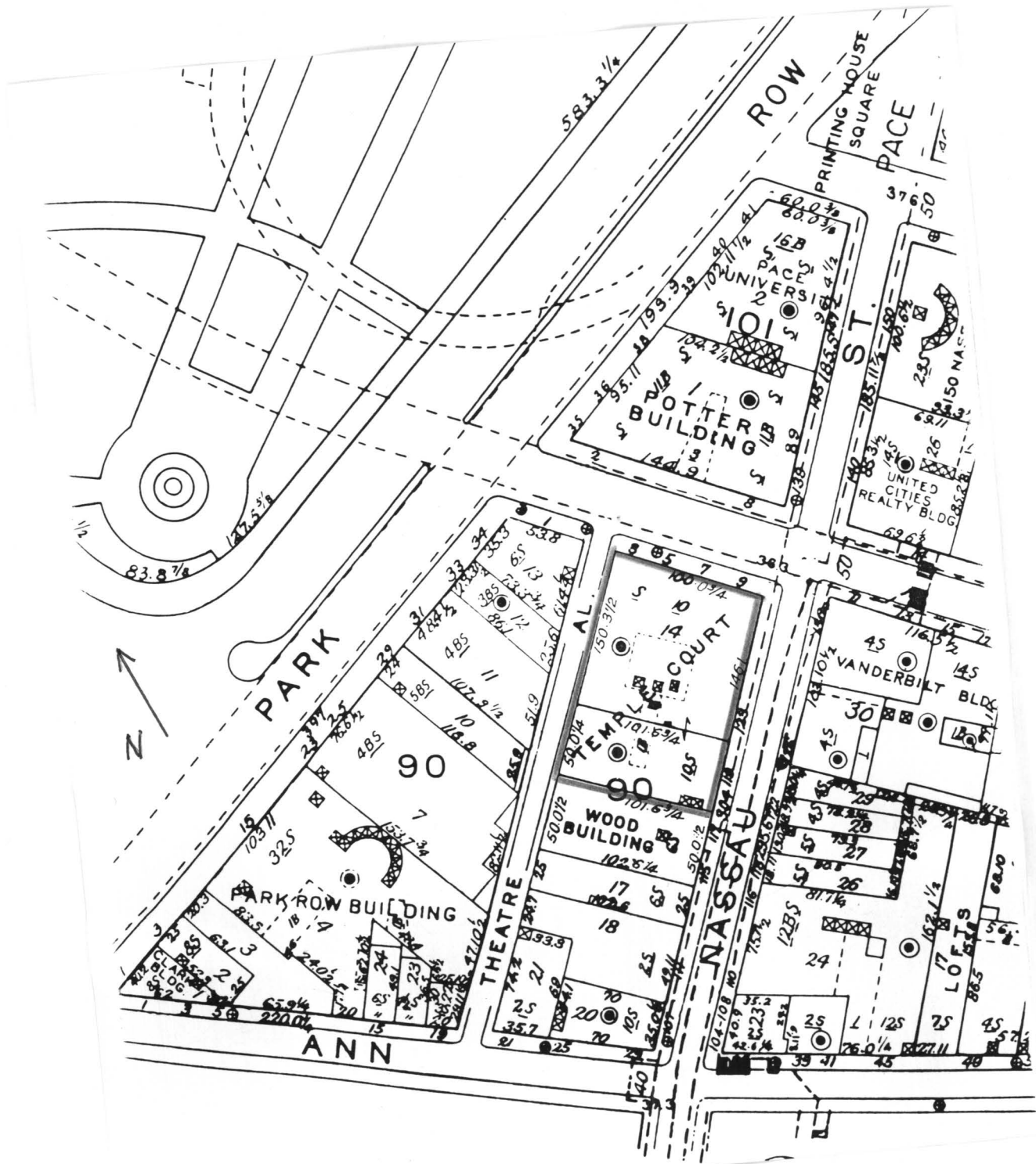


**Temple Court Annex, second-story detail**  
Photo: Carl Forster



**Temple Court Building and Annex**  
 Landmark Site: Manhattan Tax Map Block 90, Lot 14  
 Source: Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map





Temple Court Building and Annex  
 Source: Sanborn, Manhattan Land Book (1996-97), pl. 6