

NEW YORK CENTRAL BUILDING/now HELMSLEY BUILDING, 230 Park Avenue,
Manhattan. Built 1927-29; architects: Warren & Wetmore.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1300, Lot 1.

On April 13, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the New York Central Building (now Helmsley Building), and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 22). The hearing was continued to June 8, 1982 (Item No. 4). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four witnesses spoke in favor of designation. No witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation.

SUMMARY

Prior to the construction of Grand Central Terminal and the electrification and submergence of its tracks (1903-1913), Park Avenue between 42nd and 52nd Streets blighted New York as an exposed railyard. Noisy, grimy and dangerous, its locomotives tirelessly belched their waste into the air as crosstown traffic was stranded on either side of the maze-like rails. By 1929, however, in a spectacular application of skyscraper technology both above and below ground, revenue producing structures were erected on steel stilts over the yard, transforming the area into Terminal City, a prestigious mixed-use, multi-level enclave, integrated in its architectural expression and modes of transportation --- the finest realization of the City Beautiful Movement in New York. The New York Central Building provided the Terminal City complex with a dramatic lynchpin as well as a bridge to the rest of Manhattan. Through special negotiations with city officials it was constructed in 1927-29 astride Park Avenue, allowing for a continuation of the boulevard's sidewalk- and street traffic via pedestrian corridors and vehicular tunnels burrowed through the building's base.

The New York Central Building is the skyscraping counterpart of Grand Central Terminal. It was designed by the same architects in the same materials and Beaux-Arts style, simultaneously developing some of the depot's most innovative circulation systems. Swallowing Park Avenue traffic and thereby relieving congestion around the terminal, the building functions as an open gate to the "Gateway to a Continent." With a distinction all but unique in grid-patterned Manhattan, it has a double focus, as powerful by day as it is dramatic by night. Unobstructed by surrounding buildings, the New York Central's honeycombed base and slender tower dominate the street corridor while its glowing and wonderfully ornate roof, visible for miles, enriches New York's constellation of illuminated peaks. For its superb engineering, innovative circulation systems and the consequent relief of traffic, the structure is exceptional. As a conspicuous and experiential urban monument it is unsurpassed. Identified by railroad officials as the "crowning achievement" of their urban redevelopment program, the New York Central Building, now the Helmsley Building, ranks easily among the finest and best known office towers in New York.

Early History

In 1863-67 Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt acquired control of the New York & Harlem, the Hudson River and the New York Central Railroads (consolidated in 1869 as the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad). Rerouting the trains along a single line (the Harlem) for five miles south from the Bronx, Vanderbilt determined to build a new terminal at 42nd Street. He acquired most of the property between 42nd and 48th Streets (subsequently extended to 52nd Street), Madison and Lexington Avenues, and commissioned John B. Snook to design the depot (1871), with an impressive glass and metal shed by R. G. Hatfield immediately behind.

The land north of the new facility was used as a train yard: an exposed, noisy, cinder- and smoke-belching sprawl which made neighboring real estate uninhabitable to all but squatters. The paddle-shaped track network interrupted crosstown streets, leaving them dead ends on either side of the yard. Subsequent improvements lowered the rails several feet below grade and opened crosstown traffic with periodic elevated bridges. But by the turn of the century increased suburban and commuter traffic proved these palliative measures inadequate: the polluting locomotives thwarted seminal attempts at urban renewal while the still only-partially submerged tracks created an intolerable obstacle to the street traffic which the terminal inevitably generated. Solutions to these and a panoply of related problems came in 1903 when William J. Wilgus, the visionary chief engineer of the New York Central, presented the railroad with a grand scheme -- ultimately proved epochal -- for the replacement of the existing Grand Central Terminal with a new, more technologically advanced facility. Key to the project was the electrification of rail lines. Unlike steam locomotives, which required open air or ventilated tunnels for release of their combusted waste, electrified trains could be submerged below ground. The acreage thus reclaimed at ground level and above could be used, Wilgus foresaw, for revenue-producing structures. High profit buildings were erected on skeletal steel supports over the tracks: "And thus from the air [was] taken wealth."¹ The alchemous plan repaid the enormous cost of the new terminal and the electrification many times over.

Realization of Wilgus' scheme involved a design competition to which four firms were invited. Per requirements, each submitted a proposal for a skyscraping terminal in the center of Park Avenue but so arranged as to connect both north and south segments of the boulevard.² The contest was won by Reed & Stem who had worked with Wilgus on previous railroad commissions (and to whom Reed was related by marriage). Their proposal called for a neo-Renaissance terminal surmounted by a 22-story hotel or office tower. Preceded on the north by a grand "Court of Honor," the depot was, in a stroke of genius, to be girdled by an "exterior circumferential elevated driveway" along which Park Avenue would flow in divided north- and southbound streams. Architects Warren & Wetmore subsequently transformed the design into the current low, monumental mass, but many of its essential features survived. Indeed, Reed & Stem's tower proposal (together with that of unsuccessful competitors McKim, Mead & White) may be seen as the germ of the New York Central Building which Warren & Wetmore constructed to the north of the terminal some two decades later.

Terminal City

In 1903 plans were submitted to the Board of Estimate for the new train station as well as for the revenue-producers that Wilgus had imagined. In addition to the head house, the proposal included mail and express terminals, a post office, and hotels. Several of the structures were undertaken concurrently with the new terminal, but not until the 1920s (after the post-World War I depression) did the precinct assume the distinctive character of the planned enclave known as "Terminal City." Building efforts initially focused on the construction of new hotels whose development, like most luxury buildings, had been stemmed by the war, and whose need near the depot was critical. Between the completion of the terminal in 1913 and the New York Central Building in 1927-29, more than a score of hotels and apartment buildings were added to the precinct, all of roughly the same height and classicizing style. These were followed, after 1922, by the erection of new office buildings which, although taller than the hotels, were nonetheless related in style, and frequently designed by the same architects.³ In each case the new buildings marched north, perched on steel stilts over the railyard. They transformed Park Avenue into a grand and cohesive urban corridor with a ribbon of spinal plantings. In the process they earned for this boulevard the Park Avenue name which, although official since 1888, had previously been little deserved.⁴ (See figs. 2 & 3, p. 9) The 34-story New York Central Building was the final addition to Terminal City. Taller, more dramatic and conspicuously sited than any other unit in the complex, it became the riveting lynchpin of "one of the most urbane groups of commercial buildings in the world."⁵

The creation of Terminal City was a direct outgrowth of the "City Beautiful Movement." Fostered by the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, this movement sought to transform the haphazard development of American metropolises into clean, symmetrical urban centers, beautified by parks, public monuments and axial roadways, and guided in their future growth by a comprehensive plan for transportation and architectural integration. Like other cities (most notably Washington, D.C. with its MacMillan Plan of 1902-03), New York attempted implementation. In a little-known effort beginning in 1902 and culminating five years later, the New York Public Improvement Commission submitted a comprehensive scheme for the city's development "so designed that all its parts shall be consistent, the one with the other, and form a homogeneous whole."⁶ This was the first time since the establishment of Manhattan's street grid in 1811 that a general urban plan had been proposed for New York; it met with unmitigated failure. Calling for parkways, subsidiary streets, pedestrian arcades and imposing vistas (all aspects of Terminal City), the municipal scheme was undermined by an over-emphasis of aesthetic concerns. It suffered from an unrealistic exclusion of economic and social forces and, perhaps most damagingly, from the inability of democratic government to consolidate its widely-diffused powers for urban renewal on such an imperial scale.

The degree to which city bureaucracy was incapable of action contrasted starkly with the position of the railroad at the turn of the century: a multi-million dollar private enterprise whose capital, organization and vast real estate holdings permitted -- indeed, encouraged -- a coordinated development policy. Moreover, the railroad's massive physical needs, and its cultivated civic and philanthropic self-image found appropriate architectural models in the ancient, Renaissance and Beaux-Arts

public buildings which so inspired the City Beautiful Movement. Wilgus, Reed & Stem, and Warren & Wetmore, among others, were nurtured on utopian urban visions. Their creation of the mixed-use, multi-level Terminal City, integrated in its architectural expression and modes of transportation, is one of the best, if not the greatest, legacy of the City Beautiful Movement in New York. The achievement was challenged -- arguably equalled -- only by Rockefeller Center which, built in the 1930s, followed the Terminal City prototype.⁷

Architects of the New York Central Building

Charles Delevan Wetmore (1866-1941) received an A.B. degree from Harvard in 1889 and three years later, in 1892, graduated from its Law School. He had also studied architecture, and before joining the legal firm of Carter, Ledyard & Milburn, designed for his alma mater the Claverly, Westmorly and Apley Court dormitories. It was during a consultation about the design of his own house that Wetmore met his future partner, Whitney Warren (1864-1943), a graduate of Columbia College (1886), of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1887-94) and subsequently, a member of the New York office of McKim, Mead & White. Warren, impressed by his client's architectural ability, suggested that Wetmore leave the practice of law. The two men formed a partnership in 1898. Wetmore specialized in the firm's legal and financial affairs; Warren emerged as the principal designer.

Warren & Wetmore's first major commission came just one year later when they prevailed in a contest for the design of the New York Yacht Club (1899). An enormously auspicious beginning, this celebrated project was nonetheless succeeded only by lesser residential works and modest office buildings. Not until 1903 did the firm emerge on the forefront of New York architecture and then, under suspect terms: despite the victory of Reed & Stem in the competition for Grand Central Terminal, and indeed, without the knowledge of that premiated firm, Warren & Wetmore submitted another scheme for the depot to William K. Vanderbilt, then chairman of the board of the New York Central (and a cousin and close friend of Whitney Warren). The strength of nepotism was proven, as were Wetmore's skills as an attorney. In a (doubtlessly strained) compromise, Warren & Wetmore became associated with Reed & Stem on the terminal, but later assumed total control of design.⁸ Over the course of a decade they combined their low-lying Beaux-Arts proposal with essential elements from Reed & Stem's more innovative scheme.

In the end, the eminently gifted, if opportunistic, Warren & Wetmore achieved the greater fame, and it was they who became the preferred architects of the New York Central. Engaged by the railroad almost continuously for a quarter-century, the firm was responsible for much of the development of Terminal City. Beginning with the Biltmore Hotel in 1911-13 (designed in association with Reed & Stem; demolished), Warren & Wetmore executed some of the most prestigious hotels in the zone, including the Belmont (1905; demolished), the Ritz-Carlton (1910; demolished), the Vanderbilt (1912), Commodore (1916), Linnard (1919; demolished), and the Ambassador (1921), as well as the post office adjacent to Grand Central, several service structures for the railroad, nearly a dozen Park Avenue

apartment buildings, office buildings and numerous shops. Together with such notable (non-railroad sponsored) commissions as the Heckscher Building of 1920, the award-winning Aeolian Building of five years later, and the former Bonwit Teller department store of 1928 (all on Fifth Avenue), as well as Steinway Hall on West 57th Street (1925), Warren & Wetmore executed at least 92 buildings and building additions in New York, with more than a score of additional commissions elsewhere in the continent.⁹ The New York Central Building was their final undertaking for the railroad and the last major project executed by the firm in New York. Completed in 1929, it preceded Warren's retirement by only two years. The office closed a decade later upon Wetmore's death in 1941.

The New York Central Building

Between the completion of Grand Central Terminal in 1913 and the 100th anniversary of the New York Central Railroad in 1926, the number of passengers annually served by the depot nearly doubled, rising prodigiously from 23 million to 43 million in just over a dozen years.¹⁰ During the same short period, in a historically unparalleled feat, the most formidable engineering problems had been solved, and Terminal City had risen triumphantly above the tireless railyard. By 1926 the only open cuts in the precinct lay on either side of Park Avenue between 45th and 46th Streets. Work on the combined sites began later in the same centennial year and in March 1929 -- just seven months before the stock market crashed -- New York Central's executives relocated from their corporate offices in 466 Lexington Avenue into the top three floors of their new namesake building across the street. Towering above its neighbors, the 34-story structure literally provided "the crowning achievement" to the railroad's urban development plan.¹¹ So skilled were its design and execution, and so magnificent its siting, that the railroad's trade journal confidently predicted that the New York Central Building was "destined to become one of New York City's landmarks."¹²

Traffic Hardly less spectacular -- and to the mind of city officials,
Relief far more important -- was the solution to a major source of New York traffic congestion. Although elevated drives around Grand Central had been proposed by Reed & Stem and subsequently incorporated into the design of Warren & Wetmore, their construction did not begin until 1917, four years after the terminal's completion. Not until 1919 (by which time negotiations for the New York Central Building had already commenced) did the road system open to the public, and then with only short-term and partial resolve. Ascending/descending the Pershing Square Viaduct at 40th Street, both north- and southbound traffic continued along the west side of the terminal atop an elevated drive, superimposed like a second story over Vanderbilt Avenue. (Depew Place, flanking the terminal on the east, also had an elevated level but this was a private way, reserved for baggage and freight deliveries). The western viaduct allowed vehicles to travel along busy 42nd Street without interruption by a north-south artery. Within a few short years, however, increased traffic created the most vexatious bottleneck three blocks north, at 45th Street, where the ramp descended to grade: 13 lanes of bi-directional traffic converged from Park and Vanderbilt Avenues, 45th Street and the elevated drive, spilling into

adjacent streets and strangling the essential flow of this midtown commercial hub.¹³ Construction permits for the New York Central Building were withheld until a scheme to relieve this insufferable congestion had been submitted.

Roadways & Tunnels An agreement was reached in 1924 after five years of negotiation, during which time the railroad totally revised its plans. Instead of following through with its original intention to erect "one building on the west side of Park Avenue, the same size as the Postum Building [21 stories] and another on the east side of Park Avenue similar to the Park Lexington Building [also 21 stories]," the New York Central proposed to construct one large building astride the boulevard.¹⁴ In exchange for the required variances, city officials requested, and received from the railroad, the extension of Vanderbilt Avenue two blocks north of its former terminus at 45th Street. The New York Central also agreed to improve the elevated drive along the west side of the terminal and to construct a companion drive on its east (a transformation of the private delivery platform atop Depew Place) so that public traffic could flow around the depot as originally planned, in bifurcated one-way lanes (southbound on the west; northbound on the east).¹⁵ Instead of descending to grade amid the confusion of 45th Street, the elevated drives were to span that street on bridges and, through specially granted easements, continue north on ramps through the base of the proposed New York Central Building. Cars emerging from its vehicular tunnels at 46th Street would proceed uptown along Park Avenue's newly widened traffic lanes.¹⁶ A corollary of the same agreement provided for "a permanent and perpetual easement of passage on foot," namely the continuation of Park Avenue's sidewalks through two open (shop-lined) corridors on either side of the tunnels. (See photos on pp. 34, 37, 38).

Manhattan Borough President Julius Miller hailed the ingenious circulation system as "the biggest thing in traffic relief in twenty years."¹⁷ The masterminds behind the project were George A. Harwood, Ira A. Place and Amos Schaeffer, all of whom are memorialized by bronze plaques on the New York Central Building's main facade.¹⁸ Execution of the tunnels required reinforcement by special girders and trusses for superstructure support, and, as a protection against vibration, their erection independent of the building's frame. In

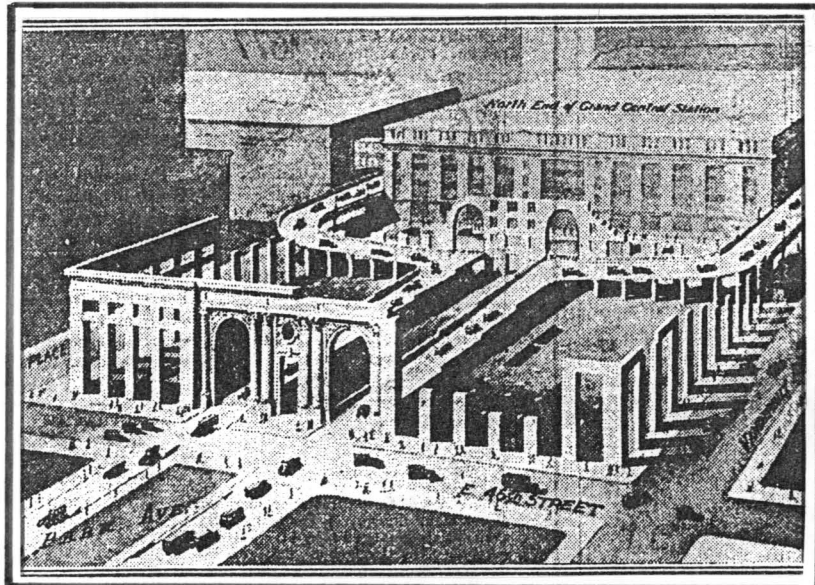


Fig. 1. Section of the New York Central Building showing roadways (pedestrian corridors not illustrated). 46th St. and Park Avenue are in the center foreground; Depew Place at left; Vanderbilt Avenue at right; Grand Central Terminal in rear.

addition, the two road-ways -- both curved and banked -- had to be supported on stanchions installed at a slope so that cars could climb to the elevated 45th Street bridges. The innovative design allowed Park Avenue traffic to continue unimpeded between 46th and 40th Streets -- a flow which, to this day, is still an exhilarating experience: one burrows through the New York Central Building negotiating its sharp turns, only to emerge above the city and descend, in roller coaster fashion, down the Pershing Square Viaduct (and, if one chooses, further south, through the subterranean Belmont tunnel -- originally a locomotive cut -- all the way to 33rd Street). There was, in all of it, a comforting urban justice: the railroad supplied the brilliant remedy to the traffic jams which for so many years it had created. No less germane was the solution's reliance on tunnels, particularly as the New York Central had achieved its mighty prowess by blasting and tunneling through so much craggy terrain, both along Park Avenue and beyond.

Design Influences Inspiration for the design drew obviously from the four competitive proposals submitted for Grand Central Terminal in 1903. Excluding Reed & Stem's preferred scheme with its circumferential viaducts, both Samuel Huckel and McKim, Mead & White provided for the continuation of Park Avenue via tunnels through the depot (as presumably did Daniel Burnham in his now lost entry). McKim's firm executed a version of its unsuccessful terminal proposal for the 26-story Municipal Building at the head of Chambers Street. Designed in 1908 and completed in 1916, this City Beautiful skyscraper, like the New York Central Building of a decade later, includes a monumental arcade through which vehicular traffic originally flowed. Also similar are the projecting side wings which give the Municipal Building (and the more graceful 46th Street facade of the New York Central Building) a depressed U-shaped plan.

One can also perceive correspondences between Warren & Wetmore's tower and the chaste classicism of Reed & Stem's 22-story terminal proposal, but most conspicuous is Warren & Wetmore's effort to complement their own earlier work on Grand Central. Like the terminal, the New York Central Building was constructed of limestone with bronze grilles, ornamented by symbols of industrial progress,¹⁹ and crowned by a heroic clock. Bridging Park Avenue with imposing Beaux-Arts arches, both structures are enlivened at ground level by carefully integrated shops. The correspondences are as binding and intentional as they were clearly stated in the New York Central Building's specifications.²⁰ Similarly, and despite the almost exclusive priority of Art Deco design for contemporaneous skyscrapers, the New York Central was articulated "along strictly classical lines."²¹ The decision to so thoroughly incorporate it with the depot and, by extension, with the rest of Terminal City reinforced the urbane cohesiveness of this "first planned precinct in New York."²²

Construction History Contrary to the normal (and usually ineffective) course of development whereby the railroad erected its buildings and the city, in an independent effort, the surrounding streets,²³ the New York Central assumed physical responsibility for every aspect of construction. The arrangement proved particularly judicious because the entire campaign took place over double-level live trackage. In turn, city officials made every effort to aid and expedite the undertaking.

So successfully did the two parties interact that the enterprise was publicly hailed as a model of private and municipal cooperation.²⁴

Foundation preparations began in December 1926. Final plans for the structure were submitted on February 11, 1927, and three months later, on May 19th, 350 men from the James Stewart Construction Company anchored the last of the New York Central Building's steel piers 50 feet into the ground.²⁵ The task of providing adequate support for the superstructure had been particularly demanding: the entire campaign took place amid double level tracks which serviced more than 700 trains daily (a locomotive passed through operations approximately every 1-1/2 minutes of each working day). The problem was further compounded because the rails (now electrified) prevented any possibility of continuous foundation walls and even more perplexing, because the frequent non-alignment of upper and lower tracks prohibited the use of through-columns. A solution was achieved through a cleverly staggered skeletal steel frame in which upper level supports were carried on girders spanning the lower tracks. The lower piers, in turn, were irregularly spaced and anchored into the ground as the maze of rails would allow. The building was insulated against vibrations from the rumbling trains with lead and asbestos mats, and further protected by the 4-inch compressed cork tubes which encased those piers adjacent to rails.²⁶ More than 9,000 tons of steel were used in the foundations and ground floor alone. The entire structure required some 26,000 tons, a good deal of which went into construction of the vehicular roadways.

Work continued at a rapid pace and on April 5, 1928 -- just hours after the death of Chauncey Depew, chairman of New York Central's board of directors -- the last rivet was driven into the 34-story steel frame.²⁷ A temporary certificate of occupancy (# 11979) was issued in late December, and on September 25, 1929, building operations were brought to a close. Three years later the New York Central Building was acclaimed "the most remarkable office building in the world...even the wonderful Hudson Bridge [George Washington, 1931] required no greater engineering skill to construct."²⁸

Urban Impact However brilliant, the New York Central Building's engineering did not fully account for its singular popularity. Even before completion, and continuing unstemmed until the present day, this "absolutely glorious"²⁹ structure has captivated New York like few others. Regarded by many as "the most beautiful and imposing tower" in midtown,³⁰ it enjoys a distinction all but unique in grid-patterned Manhattan: the building has a double focus. Unlike most New York skyscrapers whose ground floors are visible only at close range and which consequently depend upon distinctive crowns for recognition, the New York Central Building plays a commanding role at both street level and on the skyline. Spanning Park Avenue, its great triumphal arches not only complement and give passage to Grand Central, but echo one of the finest aspects of its original City Beautiful design. Projecting from either side of the apse-like recess in the center of the 46th Street facade, the building's 15-story wings embrace the Park Avenue corridor and realize -- in however vestigial terms -- the "Court of Honor" which Reed & Stem had intended to locate at the north of the terminal.

The impression was particularly imposing in the 1930s and 1940s when the nearly uniform base-, cornice- and rooflines of Park Avenue's midrise buildings acted like powerful orthogonals, leading irresistably to the focal New York Central Building. Although the streetscape was radically altered in the 1950s and 1960s, convincing elements of this once truly imperial vista survive in the wealth of scrolls, fasces, flags and military insignia which decorate the New York Central Building's (recently illuminated) triumphal arch in (now gilded) bas-relief. Most compelling is the heroic clock which Edward McCartan framed with reposing gods four times life size.³¹ The sculptural composition provides the dramatic focus of the 46th Street facade, just as the entire building does for all of Park Avenue. (See photo on p.35)

The Tower

In erecting the tower, a conspicuous symbol of the railroad's might, New York Central officials made proud comparisons with the Washington Monument, noting with considerable pleasure that their building was 5-6 feet taller.³² They might also have compared it to the obelisks of baroque Rome which, planted in open piazzas and visible from afar, served as exclamatory urban focuses.

At 567 feet the New York Central Building was tall enough to control Park Avenue's 140 foot width, but sufficiently slender to allow the sky to slide by on either side of its shaft -- just as it permitted the boulevard's street traffic to flow through its base.³³ The building functioned as a bridge, not a barrier. And while this wonderfully urbane spatial flow was fatally smothered in 1963 when the much taller and wider Pan Am Building stole the sky (compare fig. 3 with the current photographs on p.34) the New York Central maintains a dignity and monu-

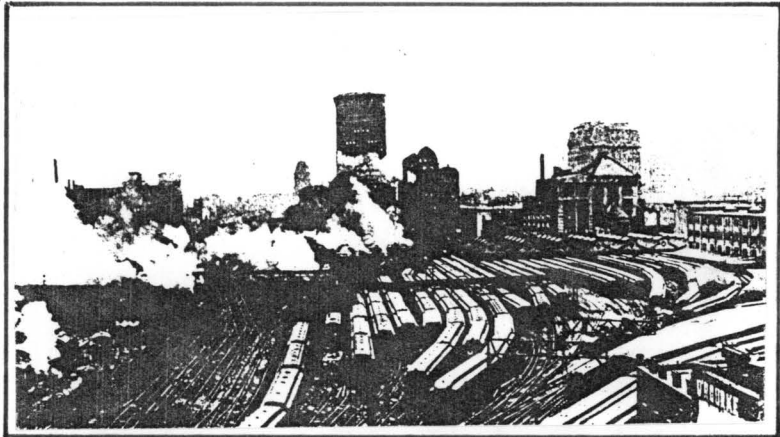
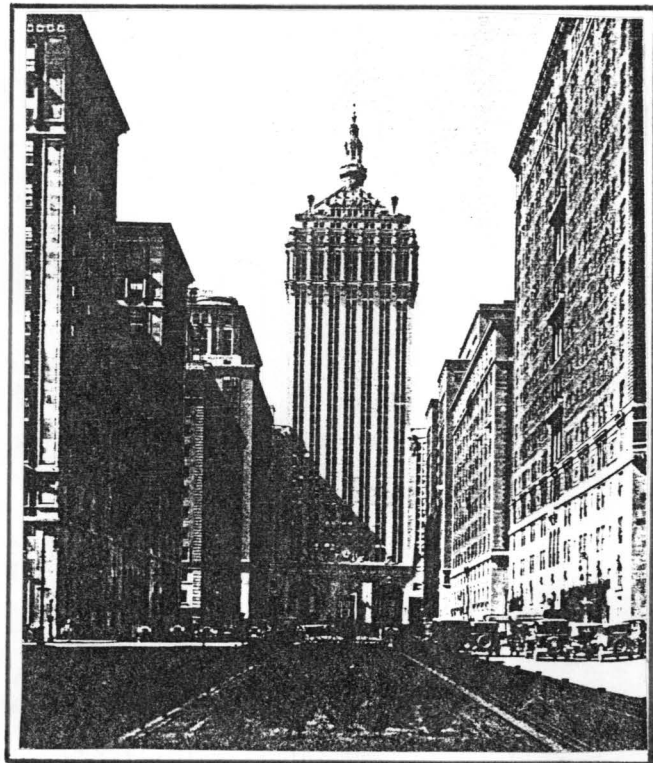


Fig. 2. Exposed railyard of the New York Central in 1906, view to the south.

Fig. 3. Terminal City, view to the south showing the axial New York Central Building and the Park Avenue corridor, 1929.



monumentality independent of size. For this, a good deal of credit belongs to its exuberant cupola-crowned roof, glistening by day with gold leaf, and illuminated like a fiery constellation by night.

The New York Central first appeared on the evening skyline on January 21, 1929. Batteries of flood lights illuminated all four sides of its tower "from base to top." Most of the building's 100,000 candlepower lights, however, accentuated the intricately detailed roof, maximizing the reflective glow of its gold and copper sheathing (nearly 300,000 pounds of which were applied).³⁴ The building's crowning feature, a marvelously ornate cupola, was literally designed as a beacon. (See photograph on p. 35) Blazing with "32-marine-type fixtures," it housed a great glass ball (a 6,000 watt lantern) which, "amplified and projected by a special system of reflectors," had the force of a coastal lighthouse. Eight supplementary projectors threw flame-tinted light through the cupola's oval openings, additional "flaming torches" burning on each corner of the tower's octagonal roof. To the distinct pleasure of New York Central's officials, their building had made a conspicuous mark on the land, visible "for miles up Park Avenue, and also from lower Manhattan, New Jersey and Brooklyn."³⁵

Recent History Like other skyscrapers in New York, the New York Central Building was blacked-out during the war, only to suffer a dark future with the failing finances, and finally the bankruptcy, of the New York Central Railroad. The structure was sold in the late 1950s at which point it was rechristened the "New York General Building" -- an economic change of name which required only two letters to be recut on the cornice!³⁶

Real estate magnate Harry Helmsley purchased the building in 1977 and conferred on it his name. In the following year, an extensive renovation program was undertaken, restoring and refurbishing the building from top to bottom, interior and out.³⁷ (For changes to the Depew Place elevation, see "Alterations" on p. 23 below). And if the gilding program was somewhat too ambitiously executed, it is to the great credit of the new owner that the New York Central Building, now the Helmsley Building, has once again become a vibrant component of New York's street and skyline.

Report prepared by
Janet Adams
Research Department

Notes

1. Wilgus, quoted by John Tauranac, Elegant New York: the Builders and their Buildings, 1885-1915, New York, 1985, p. 93. See also William J. Wilgus, "The Grand Central Terminal in Perspective," (1941), p. 922ff; Carl Condit, The Port of New York: A History of the Rail and Terminal System from the Grand Central Electrification to the Present, Chicago, 1980, vol. 2, passim and the Designation Report for the exterior and particularly the interior of Grand Central Terminal, Landmarks Preservation Commission, respectively LP-0266 (August 7, 1967) and LP-1099 (September 23, 1980).
2. According to Wilgus (p. 1047), the first plan for a skyscraping terminal was prepared by Samuel Huckel Jr. in order to illustrate Wilgus' proposed air rights development to railroad officials. Wilgus submitted the scheme on December 22, 1902. For a discussion of the competition and illustrations of the various proposals, see Deborah Nevins, ed., Grand Central Terminal: City within the City, 1982, p. 10ff.
3. Among the hotels on Park Avenue were Warren & Wetmore's Margueray (1918, at 47-48th St), Linnard (1919 at 50th St.) and Ambassador (1921, at 51st St.), all demolished; Schultze & Weaver's Park Lane Hotel (1924, at 48th; demol.) and Waldorf Astoria (1931, at 49th); and The Drake (Bing & Bing, 1927, at 56th St.). On Lexington Avenue: the Commodore (Warren & Wetmore, 1919, at 42nd St.); the Lexington (Schultze & Weaver, at 48th); the Shelton (A.L. Harmon, 1924, at 49th St.); the Barclay (Cross & Cross, 1927, at 48th St.); the Beverly (1927, at 50th St.) and Montclair (1928, at 49th St.), both by Emery Roth. On Vanderbilt Avenue: Warren & Wetmore's Biltmore (1914, at 43rd St.) and Ritz Carlton (1910, at 46th St.), both demolished; and The Roosevelt (George B. Post & Sons, 1924, at 45th St.).
Office buildings included the Postum Building (Cross & Cross, 1925, at 45th & Park); Warren & Wetmore's Park Lexington Building (1923, at 46th & Park), the 466 Lexington Avenue Building and post office (1906, at 43rd & Lexington); and Sloan & Robertson's Graybar Building (1927, 42nd & Lexington).
4. Inexplicable when bestowed, the name "Park Avenue" was conferred on Fourth Avenue in stages. By 1867 it applied as far north as 42nd St; extended in 1888 to 96th St; up to Fordham Road in 1896. (Henry Moscow, The Street Book: an Encyclopedia of Manhattan's Street Names and their Origins, New York, 1978, p. 81. See also, F.A. Collins, The Romance of Park Avenue, New York, 1930).
5. Condit, The Port of New York, 2, p. 244.
6. "Report of the New York City Public Improvement Commission to the Honorable George B. McClellan...and to the Honorable Board of Alderman," New York, 1905. The major points of this report were elaborated in the Commission's final report of 1907. See Harvey B. Kantor, "The City Beautiful in New York," New York Historical Society Quarterly, 67 (April, 1967), p. 148-71. See also Nevins, Grand Central Terminal, p. 14ff.
7. See Rockefeller Center designation report, Landmarks Preservation Commission, April 23, 1985 (LP-1446). See also James Marston Fitch, Grand Central Terminal and Rockefeller Center: A Historical-Critical Estimate of their Significance, Albany, 1974.

8. On November 16, 1911 (one day after Reed's funeral), Wetmore suggested to railroad officials that he and Warren be given full responsibility for the terminal. Such action was taken in the following month, never having consulted Stem. Stem sued Warren & Wetmore and won his case on July 17, 1916. See Nevins, Grand Central Terminal, p. 15.
9. Biographical data taken from "Architects' File," Landmarks Preservation Commission. See also for a list of Warren & Wetmore's commissions.
10. "Grand Central Traffic Jumps," New York Central Lines Magazine, 8 n10 (January 1928) p. 36.
11. New York Central Building, (promotional brochure), [1928?], p. 3.
12. "Bison Heads Adorn the New Building in New York," New York Central Lines, 9 (May 1928) p. 38.
13. "Park Avenue Traffic to Flow Through 35-Story Building," New York Times, September 18, 1927, p. 1. See also "Park Avenue Improvement," American Architect, 115 (May 28, 1919), p. 756-8 and the Pershing Square Viaduct designation report, LP 1127 (September 23, 1980).
14. "34-Story New York Central Office Building Part of Traffic Improvements," New York Central Lines, 8 (October, 1927), p. 10.
15. The City of New York and New York and Harlem Railroad Company and its Lessee the New York Central Railroad Company, "Changes and Additions to Overhead Roadways around the Grand Central Terminal: Form of Agreement and Resolution," New York, 1924, p. 13. Hereafter cited as "Form of Agreement." Work on the east drive began in spring, 1927 and was completed in January of 1928. Improvement of the west drive followed soon after. See "New Traffic Roadway Around Grand Central Terminal Formally Opened," New York Central Lines, 8 (March, 1928), p. 10-11.
16. The mall along the spine of Park Avenue was narrowed from 46th to 57th Streets, adding 36 feet to the roadway.
17. "New York Central Starts 35-Story Building," New York Times, December 9, 1926 p. 13.
18. To the right of the east tunnel entrance and on the left of the west is a bronze plaque inscribed: "Overhead Roadways around Grand Central Terminal//Built 1927-1928//City of New York// James J. Walker, Mayor//Julius Miller, President Borough of Manhattan//New York Central Railroad//Patrick E. Crowley, President//In Memoriam// Amos Schaeffer, Ira A. Place//George A. Harwood."
19. The greatest concentration of industrial symbolism appears on the 15th story cornice where, with unique Americanization, a herd of 78 terra cotta bison heads (1 above each pier) surmounts three varieties of pendant medallions. Included in the imagery are the winged helmet of Mercury (god of Commerce); the mallet and fasces (denoting Development & Power); a pendulum supporting the wheels of Progress; the winged wheel of Advancement; and the scroll of Wisdom, as well as other emblems of Research, Discovery and Engineering Progress. (New York Central Lines, 9, May 1928, p. 38). Winged wheels of

Progress also appear on the 45th Street facade's canopy anchors. (See also the lobby's elevator doors, described in the interior designation report, LP-1298).

20. "Form of Agreement."
21. "34-Story New York Central Office Building Part of Traffic Improvements," p. 102.
22. Condit, Port of New York, 2, p. 99.
23. See, for example, Jacob L. Crane, Jr., "Street Development in Relation to Railroad Terminals," American Society of Civil Engineers. Transactions, 87 (1924), p. 795-801.
24. "Topics of the Times: A Great Public Improvement," New York Times, September 19, 1927, p. 24.
25. NB67-37. See also "Central Files Plans for 35-Story Offices," New York Times, February 12, 1927, p. 27 and "Foundations Begun," New York Times, December 9, 1926, p. 13.
26. C.W.Y. Currie, "Unusual Structural Features in New York Central Skyscraper," American Architect, 134 (July 5, 1928), p. 59-62. See also New York Times, 9/18/1927. As the railroad tracks occupied the space normally used in skyscrapers for pipes, machinery and equipment storage, the New York Central Building's "basement" was installed on the 15th floor. ("New York Central Building as "Cellar" on 15th Floor," New York Times, February 17, 1929, sec. 12, p. 1).
27. "Workmen Removing a Boom," New York Central Lines, 9 (January 1928) p.22. Appointed as the first American Minister to Japan in 1866, 32-year old Chauncey Depew was persuaded by Cornelius Vanderbilt to refuse the position and to become instead a lawyer for Vanderbilt's railroad interests. Depew became director of the New York Central Railroad in 1874, its president in 1885 and chairman of the board in 1898. Serving simultaneously as United States senator for two terms (1900 - 1902), Depew gave his name to the private street on the east of Grand Central Terminal, stretching from 42nd to 45th Streets. Depew Place was subsequently extended to 46th Street, evidently in conjunction with the construction of the New York Central Building, but later used as a parking lot before being transformed into the current pedestrian mall in 1982. (See Moscow, The Street Book, p. 43; Manhattan land maps (1900 - 1982) and Depew obit., New York Times, April 5, 1928, p. 1).
28. W. Parker Chase, New York, the Wonder City, New York, 1932, p. 246.
29. John Tauranac, Essential New York, New York, 1979, p. 159.
30. Martin Clary, Mid-town Manhattan, New York, 1929, p. 120.
31. Perched some 64 feet above the pavement, the illuminated clock (9 foot diameter) is crowned by a liberty cap and supported on either side by Michelangesque -- although more sinuous -- gods. The entire composition (now gilded) measures 19 feet x 45 feet. Mercury (representing

Transportation) appears on the left, resting on the winged wheel of Progress and grasping his winged staff attribute. Female "Industry," distaff in hand, reposes on the right amid grape vines, wheat sheaves and a beehive.

Born in Albany, Edward McCartan (1879-1947) studied sculpture at Pratt Institute and the Art Students League in New York before enrolling for three years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Upon his return to America around 1908, McCartan assisted Karl Bitter on sculpture for the Pan American Exposition at Buffalo. Working later with Adams & MacNeil, he developed a sculptural approach characterized by "rigorous discipline" and technical proficiency. Aside from his work on the New York Central Building, McCartan is primarily remembered for his bronze "Diana" in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the "Eugene Field Memorial" at Lincoln Field in Chicago. (See "Clock for the New York Central Building an Outstanding Sculptural Work," New York Central Lines, 9 (June 1928), p. 21; Royal Cortissoz, "The Sculpture of Edward McCartan," New York Central Lines, 9 (June 1928) p. 22; and New York Sun obituary, September 12, 1947.

32. New York Times, September 18, 1927.
33. For discussions of the building's relationship to the street see Vincent Scully, "The Death of a Street," Perspecta, 8 (1963), p. 91-96 and Leland Roth, A Concise History of American Architecture, New York, 1979, p. 271.
34. "Gilded Tower for New York Central Edifice," New York Times, December 23, 1928, sec. 11-12, p. 1.
35. "N.Y.C. Skyscraper Tower Lighted," New York Central Lines, 9 (Februaury, 1929), p. 1.
36. Paul Goldberger, "Design Notebook," New York Times, November 30, 1978. sec. C, p. 10.
37. See "Lights Top 230 Park Avenue," New York Times, December 12, 1978, sec. 2, p. 3.

DESCRIPTION

Occupying the entire block between 45th and 46th Streets, Vanderbilt Avenue and the former Depew Place, the Helmsley Building (formerly the New York Central Building) stands astride Park Avenue. The thoroughfare's traffic lanes and sidewalks burrow through the base of the building in the form of two banked, one-way vehicular ramps and a flanking pair of shop-lined pedestrian corridors. The 34-story classicizing structure consists of three major parts:

RECTANGULAR 3-STORY BASE, clad in Indiana limestone and Texas pink granite; pierced on all four elevations by ground-level shop fronts/display windows and by building entrances on the north, south and west. The north and south facades are also pierced by pairs of vehicular and pedestrian tunnels. (See detailed descriptions of individual elevations below. Current photographs of all shop fronts/display windows and entrances in LPC file). The base, like the office block above, is comprised of two unequal halves, asymmetrically extended by two additional bays on the west.

11-STORY OFFICE BLOCK, clad in oversized buff-colored brick. Rising from the rectangular base, and surrounding the building's slender tower on the south, east and west, the office block rises like an irregular "H," its narrow east and west side elevations being deeply recessed with setback light wells. On the major (north) facade the office block is divided into two wings which curve away gently from the flush central tower. In addition to those features mentioned above, significant elements of the office block include, but are not limited to:

- Uniform glazing with paired one-over-one double-hung steel sash atop metal spandrels with inset decorative borders; flush limestone keystones above the 15th-story windows
- Continuous cornice above the 15th story ornamented with large terra cotta bison heads and decorative medallions (See p. 12 n.19 for iconography).
- Terminal limestone balustrade

SLENDER OFFICE TOWER, almost square in plan (143' 6" x 123'), which rises to the building's full 34-story height. Completely exposed above the 15th-story, all of the tower's freestanding elevations are identical. Significant features of the tower include, but are not limited to:

- Continuation of the cladding and fenestration patterns of the office block below
- 28TH STORY: windows have limestone keystones; above is a heavily bracketed cornice supporting fluted engaged triple-story Composite columns. The capitals carry prominent impost blocks (above the 31st story) which support scroll brackets (32nd story level) and the 33rd-story balustrade.

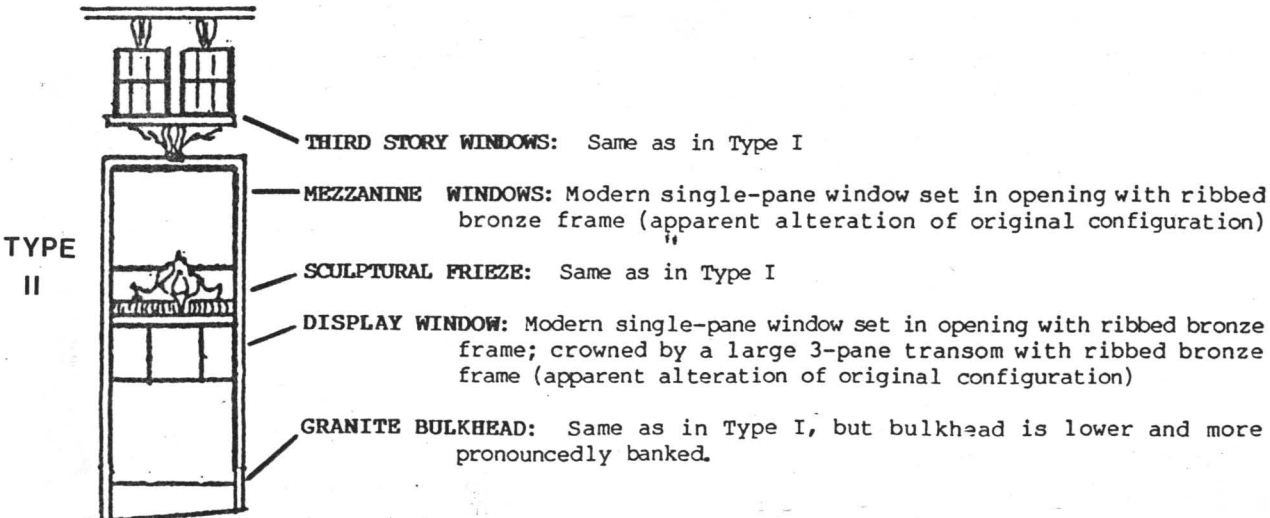
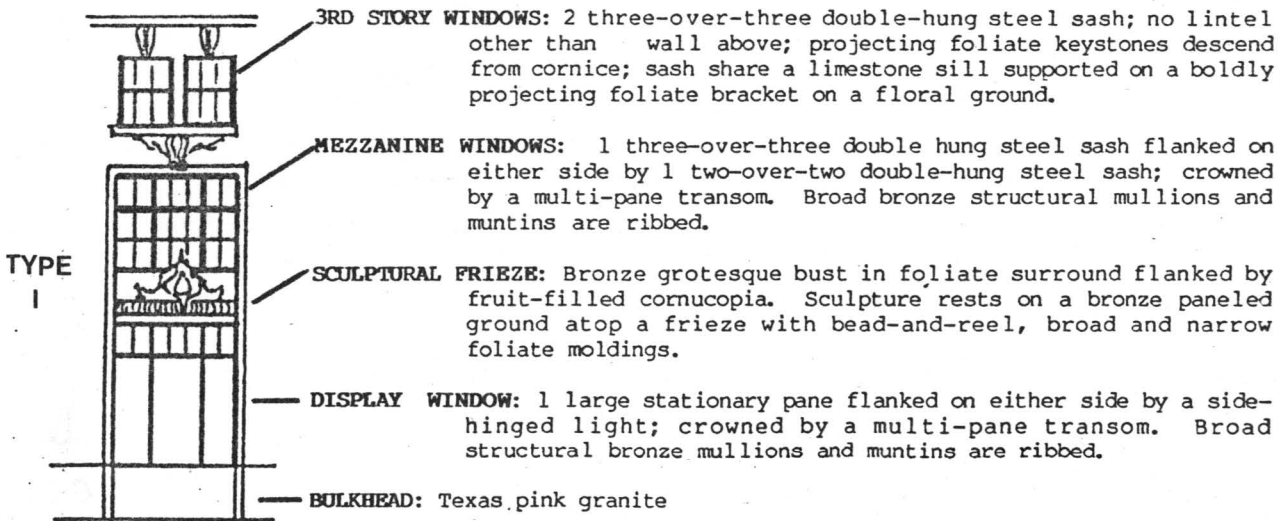
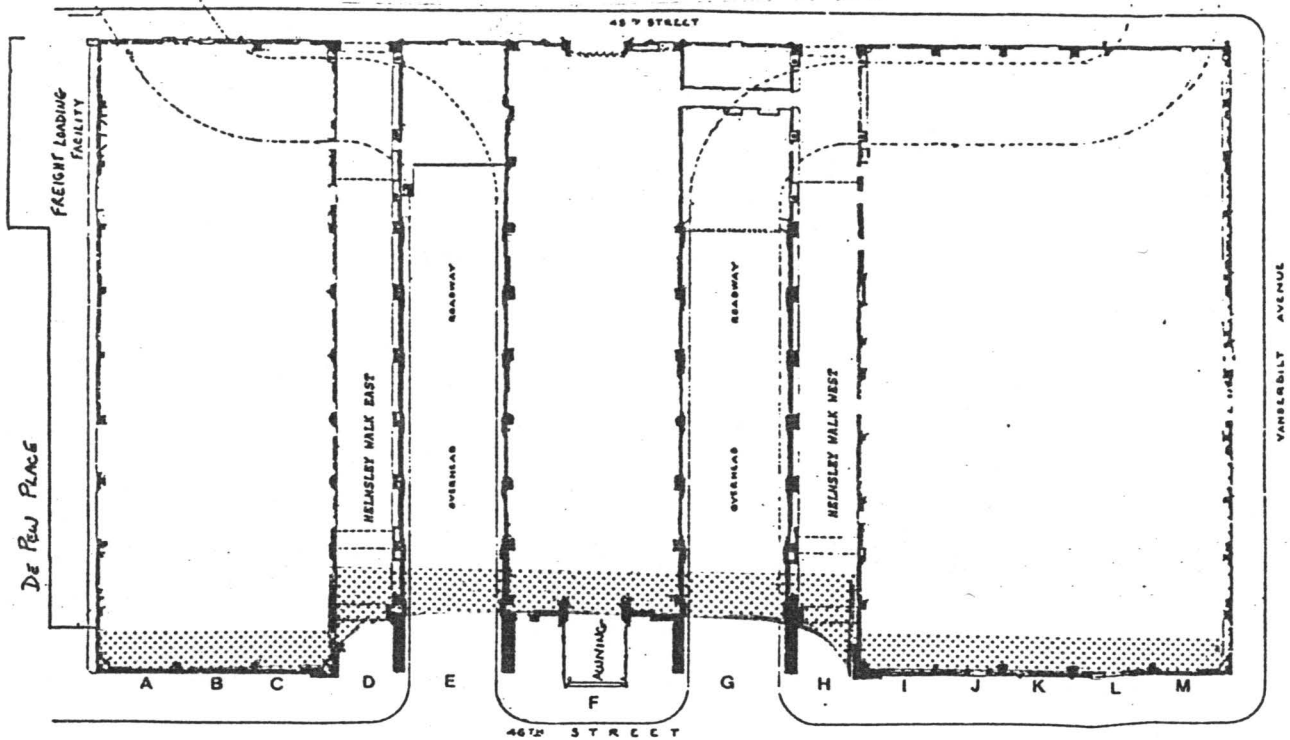
- 31ST STORY: elaborate dentilated entablature (continuous around the impost blocks)
- 32ND STORY: flush limestone keystones over windows; dentillated string course; prominent scroll brackets
- 33RD STORY: projecting bracketed keystones over windows; observation deck with limestone balustrade; broad dentil cornice with upper course of medallions and 8 projecting heads
- 34TH STORY: 3 pairs of windows identical to those throughout the tower, but elaborately framed with banded buff brick and limestone, and crowned, above a strapwork lintel, by exuberant brackets, shells and scrolls. The three window pairs are flanked on either side by a square-headed dormer (each crowned by a grotesque head) which projects from the roof. A tall chimney stack rises from each corner of the roof.
- ROOF: standing seam, newly gilded, with three rows of elaborately framed oval oculi of decreasing size.
- LANTERN: Bracketed and elaborately decorated baldacchino-like arched lantern crowned by a copper dome with a terminal open drum and pierced orb (See p. 10 for details on illumination & photo on p. 36).

ALTERATIONS

Since its completion in 1929, the Helmsley Building (originally the New York Central Building) has remained substantially intact. Exterior alterations, restricted for the most part to the ground floor, were most often executed with an admirable respect for original design and building fabric, frequently reusing original elements or casting replacement moldings to match the bronze originals. The building underwent a thorough refurbishing and gilding program in 1978.

Alterations to individual shopfronts, display windows and entrances are noted in the descriptions of each elevation on the following pages. In each case refer to plans for key to alphabetical bay assignments.

46th STREET ELEVATION



46th STREET ELEVATION

Bay	Granite Bulkhead	Display Window	Sculptural Frieze	Mezzanine Windows	3rd-story Windows	Comments
A	Intact	Type B*	Intact	New pane in ribbed bronze fr.	Intact	*Bottom light has new glass with central mullion in frame.
B	Intact	Type B*	Intact	New pane in ribbed brz. frame	Intact	*Bottom light has new glass in bronze fra Bay was originally an entrance. See original configuration in LPC file.
C	Intact	Type B*	Largely intact Lower foliate molding partially missing	New panes in ribbed bronze fr.	Intact	*Bottom light has new glass in bronze frame.
I	Intact	Type A Intact*	Intact	Style A Intact**	Intact	*Transom in 2-3-2 configuration **Windows in 2/2, 3/3, 2/2 configuration Transom in 2-3-2 configuration
J	Modern metal doors & polished granite enframent installed		Intact	Style A Intact*	Intact	*Windows in 2/2, 4/4, 2/2 configuration Transom in 2-4-2 configuration
K	Intact	Type A Intact*	Intact	Style A Intact**	Intact	*Transom in 2-4-2 configuration **Same configuration as in Bay J; Bay was originally an entrance; See illustration of original configuration in LPC file.
L	Intact	Type A Intact*	Intact	Style A Intact*	Intact	*Same configurations as in Bay
M	Intact	Type A Intact*	Intact	Style A Intact*	Intact	*Same configurations as in Bay I

Bays D, E, F, G & H are set back from the property line in a shallow apse. They are joined by a denticular entablature with a gilded string course. At the center of the limestone frieze is the gilded inscription: "230 THE HELMSLEY BUILDING 230." Above the entablature is a clock framed by gilded sculpture (See p. 9 for iconography). Above each vehicular tunnel is an escutcheon with a gilded "H."

ENTRANCES TO PEDESTRIAN CORRIDORS: Helmsley Walk East (Bay D); Helmsley Walk West (Bay H)

Square-headed double-height open portals in concave wall with prominent roll molding frame; surmounted by a gilded plumed helmet and military devices in high relief on a foliate limestone lintel. Directly above is a concave triple-window ensemble (3 one-over-one double-hung steel sash) with broad limestone and gilded shouldered frames; topped by an elaborate gilded high relief of garlands, plumes, scrolls and drapery which descends along the sides of the ensemble (See p. 23 for description of the corridors' east/west elevations).

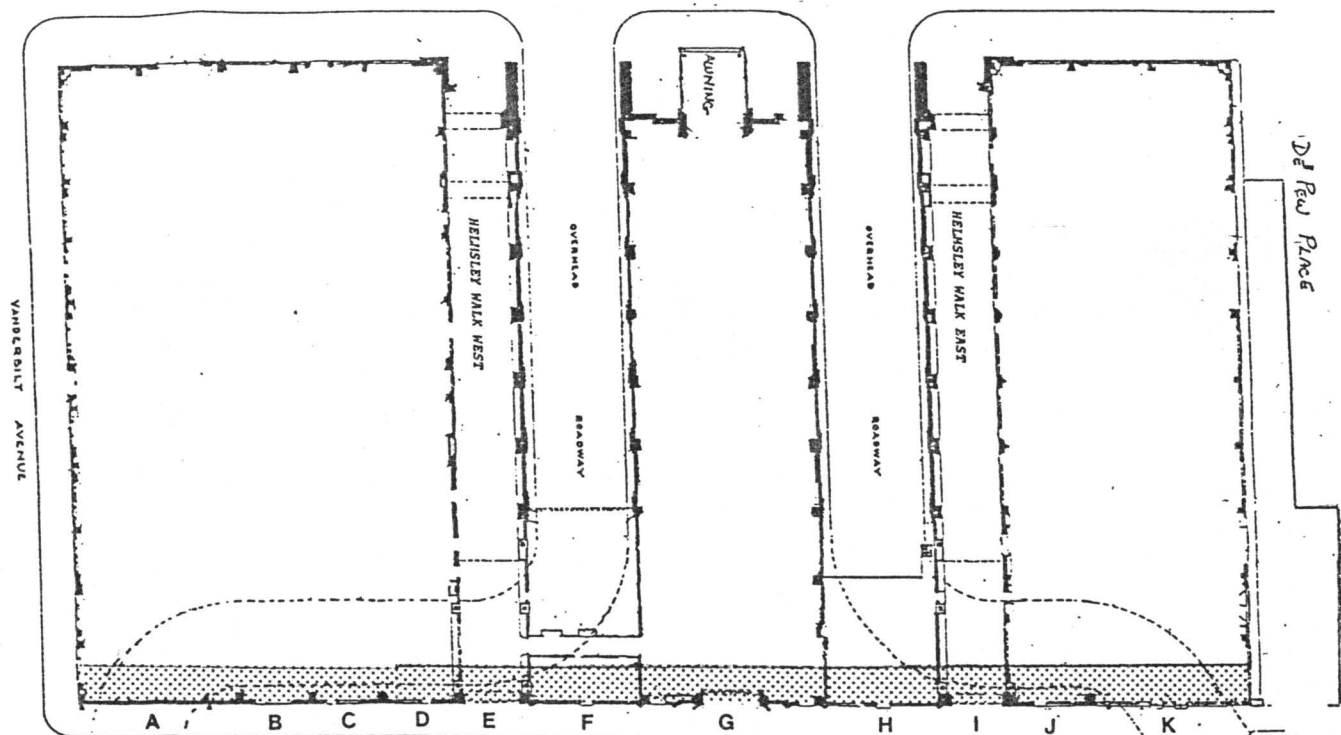
ENTRANCES TO VEHICULAR TUNNELS

Triple-height square-headed broad limestone foliate frame (recessed into wall surface) with projecting foliate bracket keystone atop arched tunnel openings (See p. 27 for description of intrados and east/west elevations of tunnels). Bronze memorial plaque on right of east tunnel/left of west tunnel (See p. 12 n.18)

BUILDING ENTRANCE

Six bronze-framed glass doors topped by a bronze lintel (inscription: "THE HELMSLEY BUILDING "). Above the lintel is a gilded address plate with foliate surround (inscription: "230 PARK//AVE"). Doors are topped by a multi-pane window ensemble, the broad structural mullions and muntins of which are embossed with a floral motif. Pairs of simple narrow mullions divide the lights between the broad structural mullions. All panes are stationary except the top-hinged single-pane windows immediately above the central muntin. The top band of the ensemble is filled with bronze decorative open-grille panels. The deeply recessed window and door ensemble is framed by prominent limestone roll moldings and topped by a deeply recessed window group: 4 one-over-one double-hung steel sash with foliate embossed frames. The group is surrounded by a broad gilded shouldered frame, flanked on either side by gilded military insignia. Below the sill is a partially gilded globe with foliage, fruit and scroll on a gilded ground. Above the group is a foliate garland-draped bracket keystone (gilded) which overlays the broad gilded foliate frame (recessed into the wall surface) that surrounds the entire entrance bay. On either side of the bay is an angled flag pole with an elaborate foliate anchor (gilded). A modern canvas awning projects in front of the doors.

45th STREET ELEVATION



Echoing the two arched tunnel entrances on the main (46th Street) facade, the 45th Street elevation is dominated by three triple-story arches: an entrance bay and two flanking arches (occupied by ground floor shopfronts with double-height open viaduct arches above). The three arches are flanked in turn by the building's two pedestrian corridors and by variously sized shopfronts, each of which is surmounted on the second floor by a balustrade and a large rectangular open aperture which ventilates the vehicular tunnels. All six apertures are crowned by foliate scroll brackets on a floral ground (identical to those on the Vanderbilt Avenue, 45th and 46th Street elevations). On the far east and far west of the 45th Street facade are double-sized shopfronts crowned on the second floor by an unornamented viaduct entrance/exit (no scroll brackets above). With the exception of the triple height arches (Bays F, H & H), each bay is pierced on the third floor by paired one-over-one double-hung steel sash (matching 3rd story windows elsewhere in the building).

Aside from the now largely obscured ground floor along the former Depew Place, the shopfronts along 45th Street have undergone the most extensive -- and least sensitive -- alterations. (See chart on the following page for current conditions).

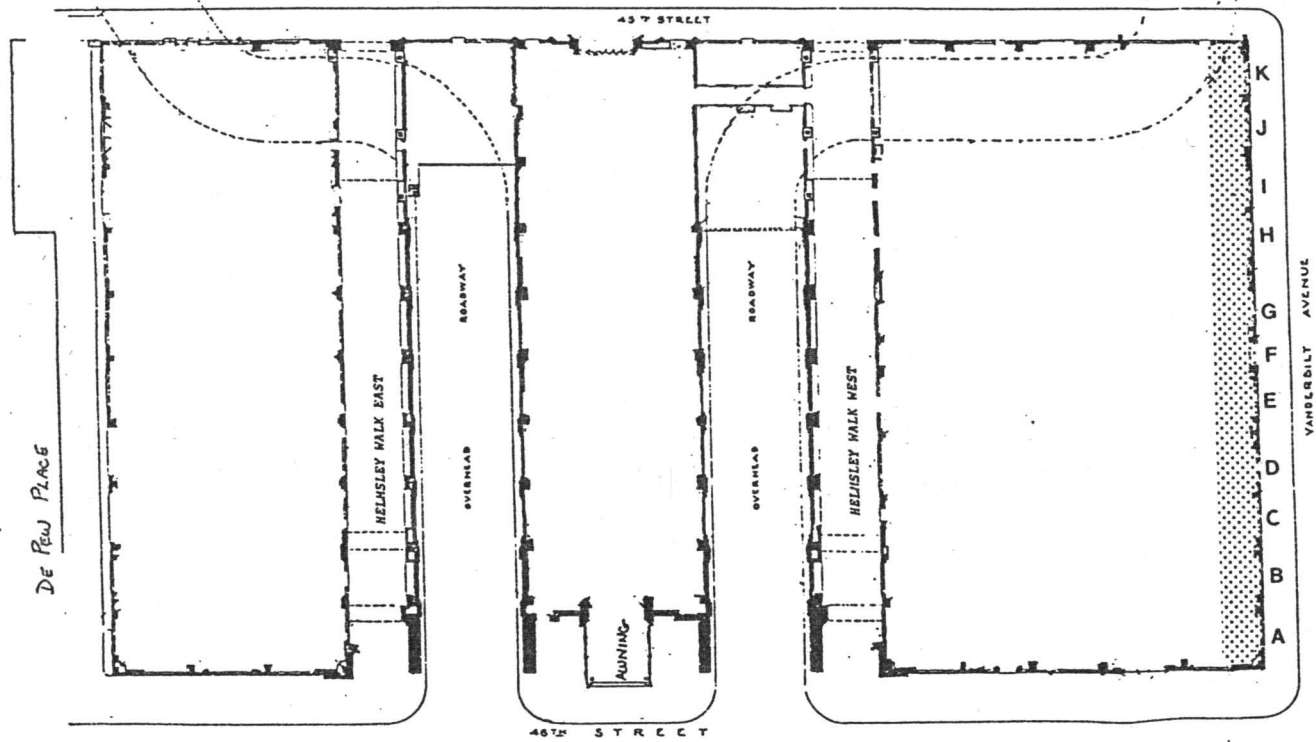
Entrance:

- Six bronze-framed glass doors surmounted by a bronze lintel (inscription: "230 THE HELMSLEY BUILDING 230"); the same inscription appears on 2 bronze plaques on either side of the doors
- A multi-pane window ensemble (above the lintel); identical to that above the 46th Street entrance (See p. 17); exception: overlaying the lower panes is a bronze address plate ("230//PARK AVENUE")
- Boldly projecting square-headed limestone roll moldings enframe the entire door/window ensemble
- A 9-pane deeply recessed oculus tops the limestone frame; below the oculus is an elaborate fruit-laden garland with terminal imperial eagles
- 2 angled flagpoles with simple anchors (on either side of limestone frame)
- 4 elaborate gilded canopy anchors (depicting the winged wheel of Progress on an energized cloud-like ground); angled from the anchors are the gilded spiral supports of the decorative bronze canopy which overhangs the entire bay; smaller versions of the same canopy appear above the entrances to the pedestrian corridors (Bays E & I) although with simpler anchors
- A prominent limestone arch enframes the entrance ensemble; the arch is crowned by a foliate scroll bracket and flanked on either side by a bronze ventilation grille
- The entrance is flanked by two deeply recessed service doors, each surrounded by a broad granite frame with a simple granite keystone.
 - Left (adjacent to Bay F): 1 bronze-framed glass (12-pane) door
 - Right (adjacent to Bay H): 1 single-leaf bronze door

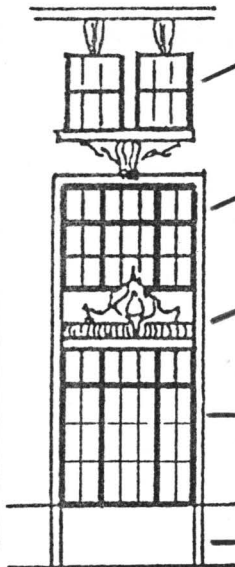
45th STREET ELEVATION

BAY	BULKHEAD	SHOPFRONTS & ENTRANCES	Sculpt. Frieze	2nd-Sty. Level	3rd-Sty. Windows
A	Partially intact (at right)	Double-size shopfront (full width of overhead roadway) flanked by projecting metal viaduct piers; original configuration altered; modern glass door, transom & side light in original bronze frame (left center); bronze-framed display window at right; shopfront obscured by modern metal box-frame overlay; 1/2 bay (right of eastern viaduct pier) has similar metal overlay: obscures original bronze-framed display window	Obscured by modern overlay	Viaduct entrance: intact	Intact
B	Intact	Original configuration, ribbed-bronze door & window frames, bronze entry sill all intact; recessed bronze-framed glass door with metal sealed transom at left; projecting housings for roll-down security gates over door and window.	Partially obscured by gate housing	Roadway aperture: intact	Intact
C	Intact	Original configuration, ribbed-bronze window & door frames, bronze entry sill & bronze jamb (left): intact; modern bronze-framed glass door deeply recessed under transom; modern 2-pane display window at right; projecting housing for roll-down security gates over entire shopfront	Same as in Bay B	Roadway aperture: intact	Intact
D	Intact	Original configuration, ribbed-bronze window & door frames, bronze entry sill: intact; bronze-framed glass door recessed beneath ventilation louvred transom; ventilation louvres installed at top left of display window (with modern mullion); retractable awning intact; side gates installed	Intact	Roadway aperture: intact	Intact
E	Open entrance to pedestrian corridor; at top: original bronze-framed fascia ("PARK AVENUE WEST"); installed below: modern back-lit fascia ("WEST HELMSLEY WALK WEST"); original decorative bronze canopy with gilded anchors and ornamented strut supports: intact			Roadway aperture: intact	Intact
F	Intact	Original configuration: double-size shopfront, ribbed-bronze door & window frames, bronze entry sill: intact; door with transom located at center; retractable awning intact (but blocked by modern replacement)	Intact	Double-height roadway arch: intact	
G	See description on preceding page				
H	Intact	Original configuration, ribbed-bronze window & door frames: intact; new doors (ALT 1277-60) at left and right of center; retractable awning with exposed scissor arms; double-size shopfront	Intact	Double-height roadway arch: intact	
I	Open entrance to pedestrian corridor: same as in Bay E, except fascias read "EAST" instead of "WEST"				
J	Intact	Multi-pane modern display window installed; no original elements	Intact	Roadway aperture: intact	Intact
K	Intact	Double-size bay: one shopfront on either side of a modern bronze-framed glazed panel; Left: modern multi-pane shopfront installed; deeply recessed modern door with 2-step original bronze entry sill (right) Right: original ribbed-bronze door & window frames with original side mullion; new 2-pane plate glass window at right; recessed door and transom with original 2-step bronze entry sill (left); projecting housing for roll-down security gates installed over entire shopfront	Largely obscured	Viaduct entrance: intact	Intact

VANDERBILT AVENUE ELEVATION



TYPE
III



3RD STORY WINDOWS: 2 three-over-three double-hung steel sash; no lintel other than wall above; projecting foliate keystones descend from cornice; sash share a limestone sill supported on a boldly projecting foliate bracket on a floral ground.

MEZZANINE WINDOWS: 1 three-over-three double hung steel sash flanked on either side by 1 two-over-two double-hung steel sash; crowned by a multi-pane transom. Broad bronze structural mullions and muntins are ribbed.

SCULPTURAL FRIEZE: Bronze grotesque bust in foliate surround flanked by fruit-filled cornucopia. Sculpture rests on a bronze paneled ground atop a frieze with bead-and-reel, broad and narrow foliate moldings.

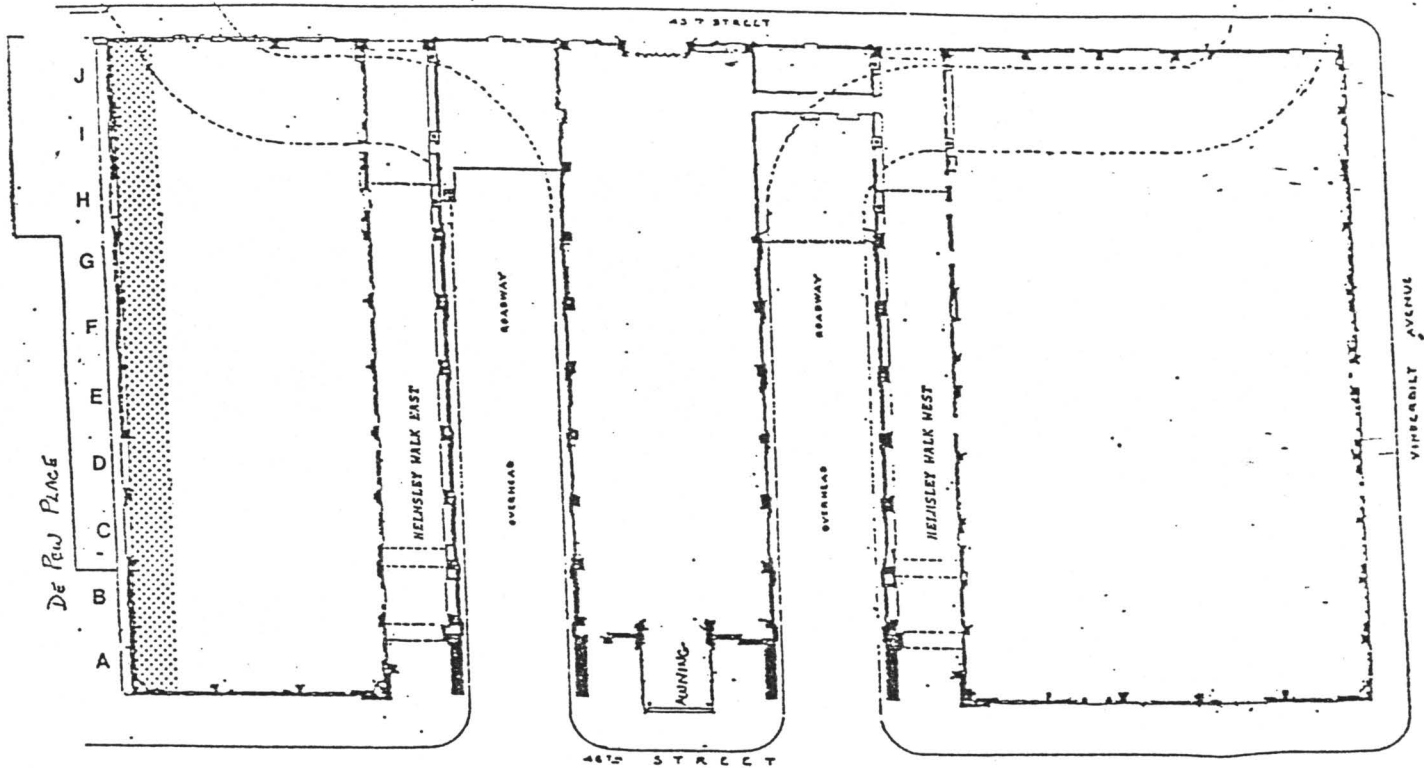
DISPLAY WINDOW: 1 large nine-pane stationary window flanked on either side by a six-pane side-hinged light; crowned by a multi-pane transom. Broad structural bronze mullions and muntins are ribbed.

BULKHEAD: Texas pink granite

VANDERBILT AVENUE ELEVATION

Bay	Granite Bulkhead	Display Window	Sculptural Frieze	Mezzanine Windows	3rd-story Windows	Comments
A	Intact	Type III, Intact	Intact	Intact	Intact	
B	Intact	Type III, Intact	Intact	Intact	Intact	
C	Intact	Type III, Intact	Intact	Intact	Intact	
D		2 deeply recessed bronze-framed glass doors flanked by bronze-framed side lights with decorative bronze lintel above; door framed by projecting bronze paneled jambs with foliate trim and crowned by a bronze medallion (with a gilded "75") in foliate surround with swan's neck pediment; structural bronze muntins/mullions divide space above door into 9 large lights; ventilation louvres installed at top left & top right.	Intact	Largely Intact*	Intact	*Ventilation louvres in top right pane of transom Bay was originally a display window; bronze doors were relocated from Bay K on 46th Street. See illustration of original configuration in LPC file.
E	Intact	Type III, largely intact: ventilation louvre installed in top left pane of left side-hinged window	Intact	Intact	Intact*	Bays E, F (half-width) and G are joined by a projecting square-headed roll molding enframing (double height). At the center of the molding is a bracket keystone with foliate and draped surround
F		Original entrance (intact): 2 deeply recessed bronze-framed glass doors with bronze-framed bottom-hinged transom; surrounded by copper frame; crowned by bronze address plate with flanking dorsal griffins (inscription: "NO 71 VANDERBILT AVENUE"); bronze decorative open grille above, stepped to reflect portal molding; portal crowned by foliate limestone lintel with bracket keystone	Limestone Frieze (orig.) with inset floral panels	2 two-over-two double-hung steel sash with 4-pane transom (orig.)	1 three-over-three double-hung steel sash (orig.)*	*No brackets/foliate surrounds under sills of 3rd-story windows in bays E, F & G
G		Modern shopfront installed; only transom and 2 bronze steps intact (ventilation louvres installed in far right pane)	Intact	Intact	Intact*	
H		Modern shop-front installed; only transom intact	Intact	Intact*	Intact	*Structural mullions/muntins intact; glazing uniformly replaced by ventilation louvres
I		Modern shopfront installed; only transom intact; (ventilation louvres installed in left and central transom pane and below)	Intact	Same as in Bay H	Intact	
J	Intact**	Modern display window in orig. bronze frame; modern metal delivery door installed at left; ventilation louvres in central transom pane and below	Intact	Intact*	Intact	*Ventilation louvres installed in right window and transom **Bays J and K are combined by a modern metal boxed shop-front which overlays and partially obscures the original configuration of the two bays.
K	Intact**	Modern display window in orig. bronze frame	Intact	Same as in Bay H	Intact	

FORMER DEPEW PLACE ELEVATION



By special negotiation with city officials, Depew Place was lengthened to 46th Street in conjunction with the erection of the New York Central Building in 1927-29. (The street had originally extended between 42nd and 45th Streets). A private way, it was designed primarily for freight deliveries. This utilitarian purpose was reflected on the eastern/Depew Place elevation of the New York Central Building with a less ornate ground floor. The original configuration (including freight entrances and simple window ensembles) was largely obscured in 1982 when Depew Place was transformed from a parking lot into a pedestrian mall. In the same campaign a new freight entrance was constructed along the southeast corner of the building, stairs installed on the north of the mall, and modern commercial spaces in glass enclosures erected along most of the building's ground floor.

The New York Central Building was originally connected to 466 Lexington Avenue (demolished) by a bridge at 15th-story height across Depew Place. The bridge was removed in 1982, requiring the installation of four new exterior windows and wall infill.

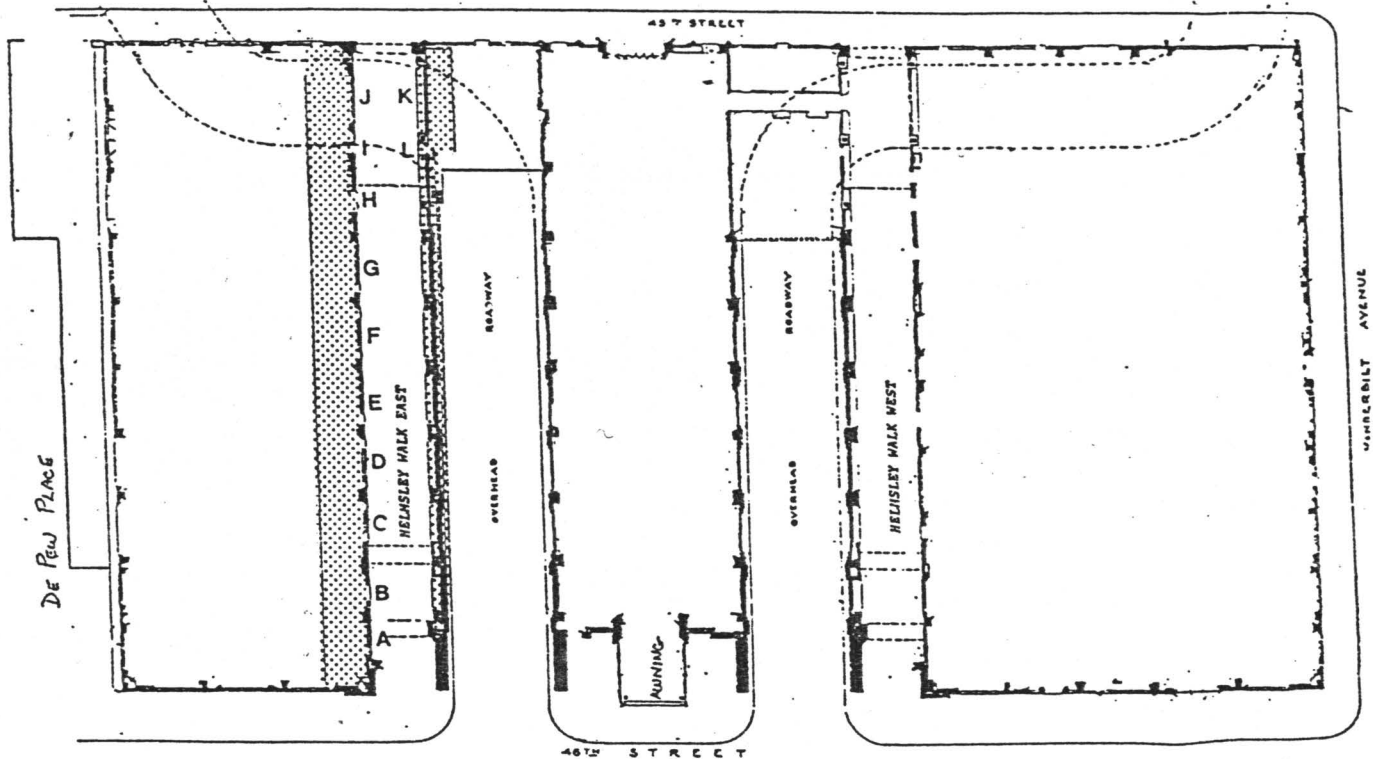
With the exception of Bay A on the far north (which repeats the configuration of Bays A - C on 46th Street; see p. 17 for description) ground floor windows along the former Depew Place included:

- Bulkhead: pink granite
- Ground Floor Window Ensemble: 3 single pane lower lights with simple metal frames/mullions; topped by a simple 3-panel metal frieze (now painted); crowned by 3 lights/ventilation louvres in simple metal frames
- Metal Spandrel: with three recessed panels (painted)
- Mezzanine Windows: 3 one-over-one double-hung steel sash in simple frames with operable transoms and simple brick surrounds
- 3rd-Story Windows: Paired one-over-one double hung steel sash with a projecting limestone sills; no lintels other than the brick wall above

FORMER DEPEW PLACE ELEVATION

Bay	Bulk-head	Ground Floor Window Ensembles	Metal Spandrel	Mezzanine Windows	3rd-Story Windows	Comments
A	Intact	Bottom light has modern single-pane in original frame	Intact	Modern glass & mullion in original frame	Intact	Same configuration as in Bays A, B, & C on 46th Street
B	Intact	Largely intact*	Intact	Intact	Intact	*Louvres and projecting ventilation hoods in transom band
C		Obscured	Intact	Screens & ventilation hoods installed*	Intact	*Wider bay with 4 windows
D		Obscured	Intact	Same as in Bay C	Intact	
E		Obscured	Intact	Intact*	Intact	*Ventilation louvres in central light; side lights & transom intact
F		Obscured	Intact	Screens & ventilation hoods installed	Intact	
G		Obscured	Intact	Same as in Bay F	Intact	
H		Obscured	Intact	Largely intact*	Intact	*Transom: metal sealed (right); ventilation louvres (left & center)
I		Obscured	Intact	Intact	Intact	
J		Obscured	Intact	Intact	Intact*	*Sill supported on scroll brack Simple limestone keystones above each window

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR (HELMSLEY WALK EAST)



Helmsley Walk East is a shop-lined pedestrian corridor which, burrowing through the building at ground level, essentially continues the Park Avenue sidewalk. The corridor has painted limestone walls, a pink granite bulkhead and concrete pavement which rises at the north and south. The upper walls of the corridor carry a projecting modern light tray which obscures the upper window heads of most shop fronts/display windows. The ceiling drops lower at the southern end of the corridor where the vehicular ramp passes overhead.

NORTH ELEVATION The corridor is approached from a double-height open portal on 46th Street (See p. 17 for description). Recessed behind/south of double-height Bays A & B, the building cantilevers over the open corridor. The northern face of this cantilever is glazed at mezzanine level by 3 one-over-one double-hung steel sash. A scroll bracket projects below the central window. Under the northern end of the cantilever are four modern boxed down lights. Suspended from the cantilever (between Bays B & C) is a large modern wall partition with gilded letters affixed on its north face: "HELMSLEY//WALK//EAST" (Southern face has modern signage).

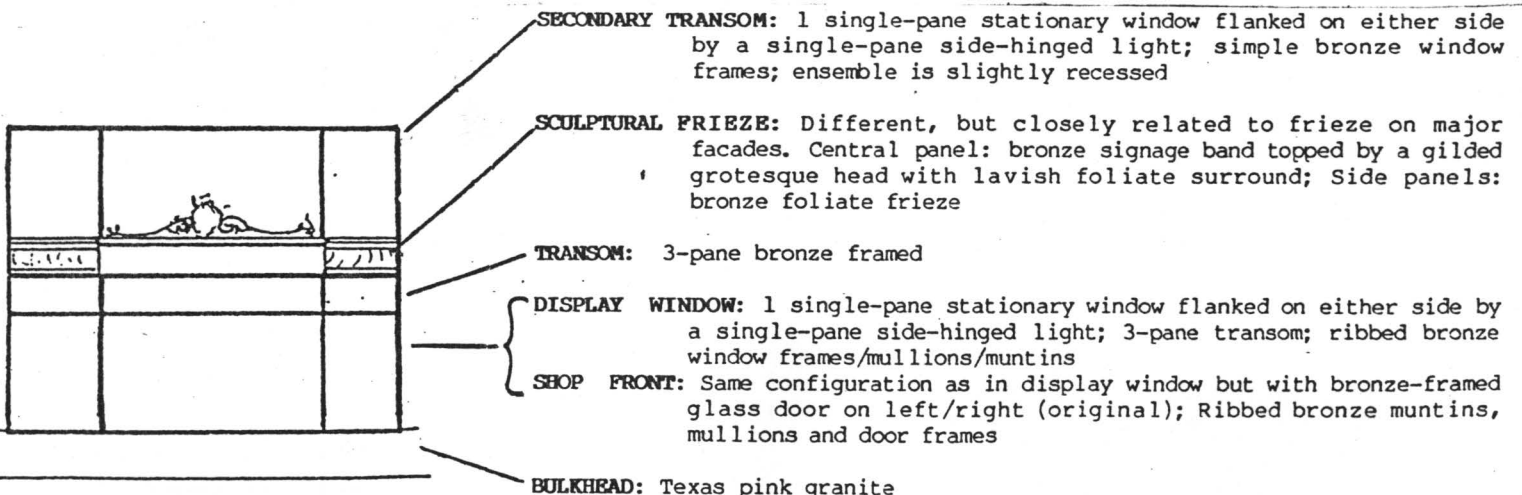
SOUTH ELEVATION Unlike the north elevation of the corridor with its deeply recessed inner wall, the corridor's south elevation (below the vehicular ramp) lies flush with the 45th Street facade. It is described in this report as part of that elevation (See p. 20)

WEST ELEVATION Bordering the vehicular ramp, the corridor's west wall is lined by a brass hand rail. Modern signage projects, between slightly protruding pilasters, along the length of the painted limestone wall (pink granite bulkhead). On the south, where the vehicular ramp is at a higher grade level than the corridor, the west wall is pierced by a display window and door (bays K & L).

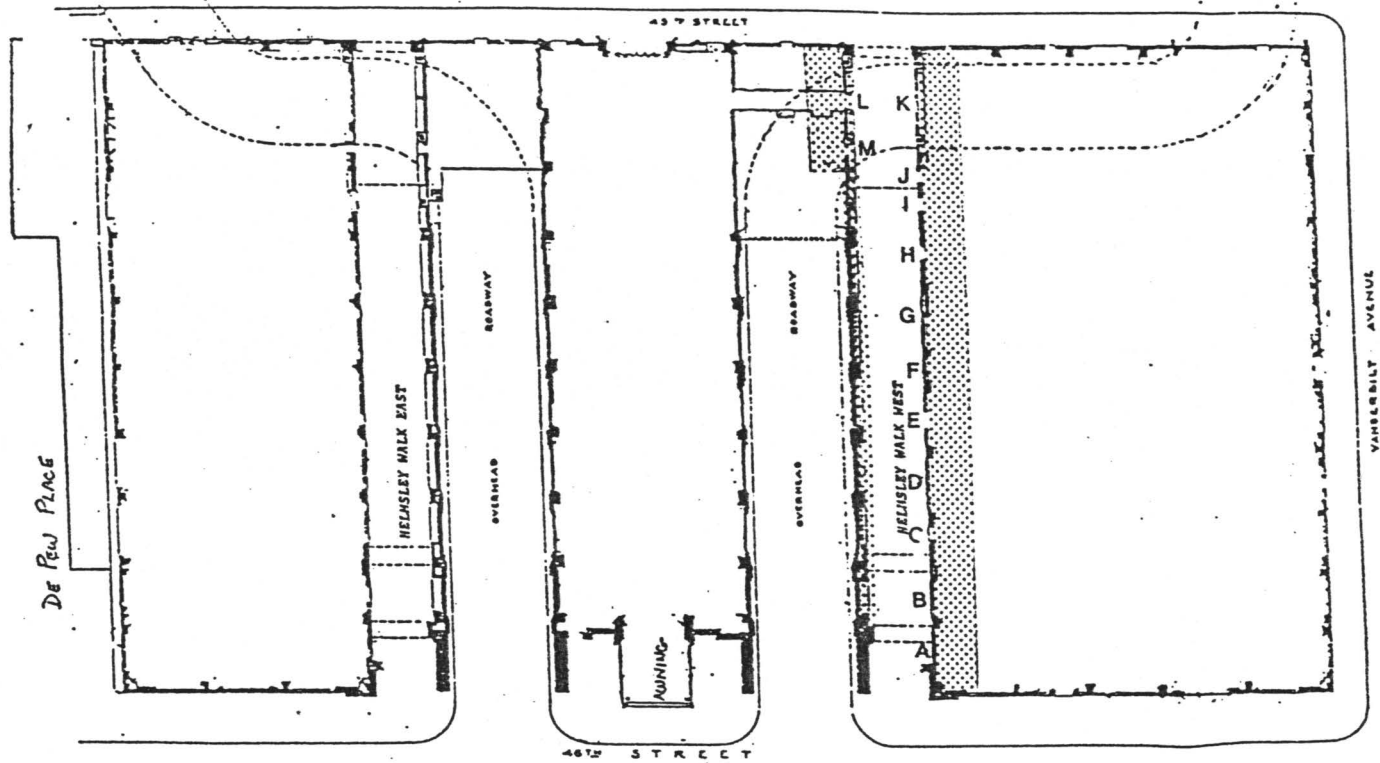
EAST ELEVATION The corridor's east wall is lined by shop fronts and display windows (and pierced by 3 service/fire doors). Although the shop fronts and display windows vary in size, they all appear to have originally conformed to the tripartite configuration illustrated on the following page. The configuration is similar to that on the building's 4 facades but reduced in scale and varied in detail. Shop fronts appear to maintain their original configuration, their bronze-framed glass doors being located on the right or left of the bay.

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR (HELMSLEY WALK EAST)

BAY	GRANITE BULKHEAD	DISPLAY WINDOW/SHOP FRONT	SCULPTURAL FRIEZE	SECONDARY TRANSOM	COMMENTS
A	Intact	Display window: 1 modern glass pane; no mullions or muntin/transom; ribbed bronze frame	Intact	Intact	Variation: Bay is reduced in width but double height; above the secondary transom are 2 one-over-one steel sash (at mezzanine level)
B		2 modern glass doors and side light installed; projecting signage conceals transom (original configuration same as in Bay A)	Intact	Largely intact: vent. louvres in bottom of right side light	Variation: same as in Bay A
C	Intact	Original shop front; bronze-framed glass door with transom at left (A/C in transom); modern single-pane shop window (no mullion or transom); side gates installed	Intact*	Intact: painted; Window heads obscured	*Small alarm box installed at left of signage band
D	Intact	Original shop front: bronze-framed glass door with transom at right; modern single-pane shop window (no mullion or transom); side gates installed	Intact	Largely intact* painted	*A/C installed in bottom of left side light; window heads obscure
E	Intact	Identical to Bay C	Identical to Bay C	Frame intact* painted	*Left side light: vent. louvres at bottom; right side light: A/C at bottom; window heads obscured
F	Intact	Identical to Bay D	Intact*	Intact; painted Window heads obscured	*Small alarm box installed at right of signage band
G	Intact	Identical to Bay C; door transom intact (painted); projecting metal housing for roll-down security gates across entire shopfront	Intact	Frame intact but obscured by modern paneled overlay A/C in bottom of both side lights; modern infill in central light; window heads obscured; painted	
H		2 deeply recessed bronze-framed glass doors; decorative bronze grille in wall above; 1 decorative bronze plaque on either side of door (on corridor wall); embossed inscription: "225//PARK//AVENUE"	-	-	
I		1 modern single-leaf glass door; slightly recessed	-	-	
J	Intact	Completely new display window	-	-	
K	Intact	Display window: new frame and mullions installed (ALT 1277-60); projecting housing for roll-down security gates			Dropped ceiling (below roadway) obscures everything above the gate housing
L		1 deeply recessed single-leaf modern glass door; projecting housing for roll-down security gates			



PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR (HELMSLEY WALK WEST)



Helmsley Walk West is a shop-lined pedestrian corridor which, burrowing through the building at ground level, essentially continues the Park Avenue sidewalk. The corridor has painted limestone walls, a pink granite bulkhead and concrete pavement which rises at the north and south. The upper walls of the corridor carry a projecting modern light tray which obscures the upper window heads of most shop fronts/display windows. The ceiling drops lower at the southern end of the corridor where the vehicular ramp passes overhead.

NORTH ELEVATION The corridor is approached from a double-height open portal on 46th Street (See p. 17 for description). Recessed behind/south of double-height Bays A & B, the building cantilevers over the open corridor. The northern face of this cantilever is glazed at mezzanine level by 3 three-over-three double-hung steel sash. A scroll bracket projects below the central window. Under the northern end of the cantilever are four modern boxed down lights. Suspended from the cantilever (between Bays C & D) is a large modern wall partition with gilded letters affixed on its north face: "HELMSLEY//WALK//WEST" (Southern face has modern signage).

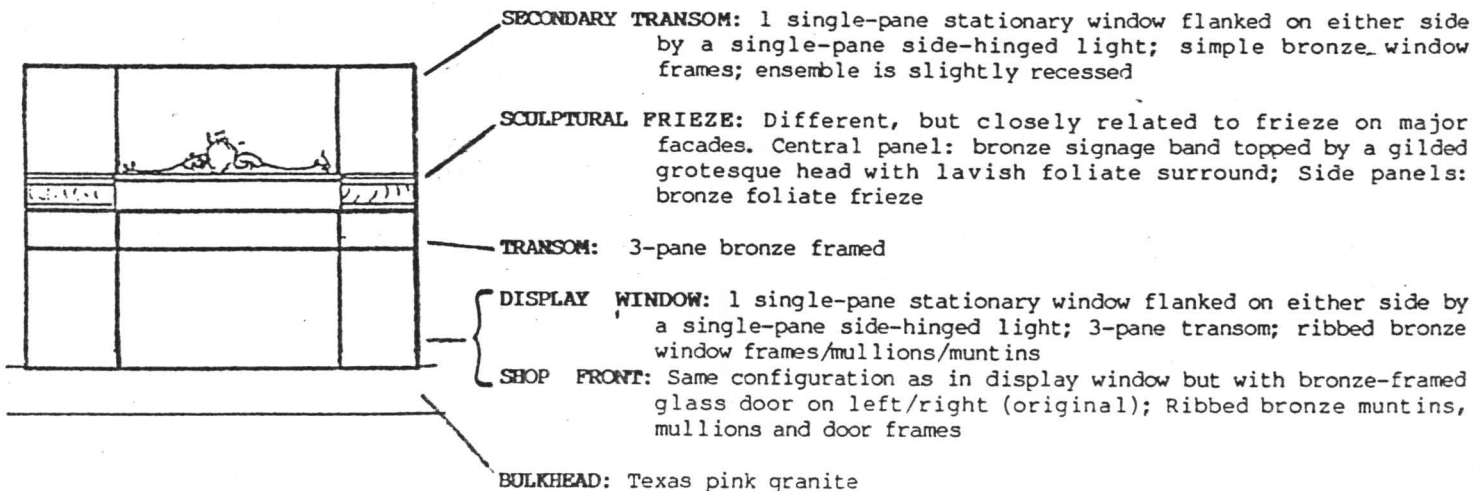
SOUTH ELEVATION Unlike the north elevation of the corridor with its deeply recessed inner wall, the corridor's south elevation (below the vehicular ramp) lies flush with the 45th Street facade. It is described in this report as part of that elevation (See p. 20).

EAST ELEVATION Bordering the vehicular ramp, the corridor's east wall is lined by a brass hand rail. On the northernmost pier is a bronze plaque (inscription: "ENTRANCE TO//230 PARK AVE"). Modern signage projects, between slightly protruding pilasters, along the length of the painted limestone wall (pink granite bulkhead). On the south, where the vehicular ramp is at a higher grade level than the corridor, the east wall is pierced by a building entrance and service door (bays L & M).

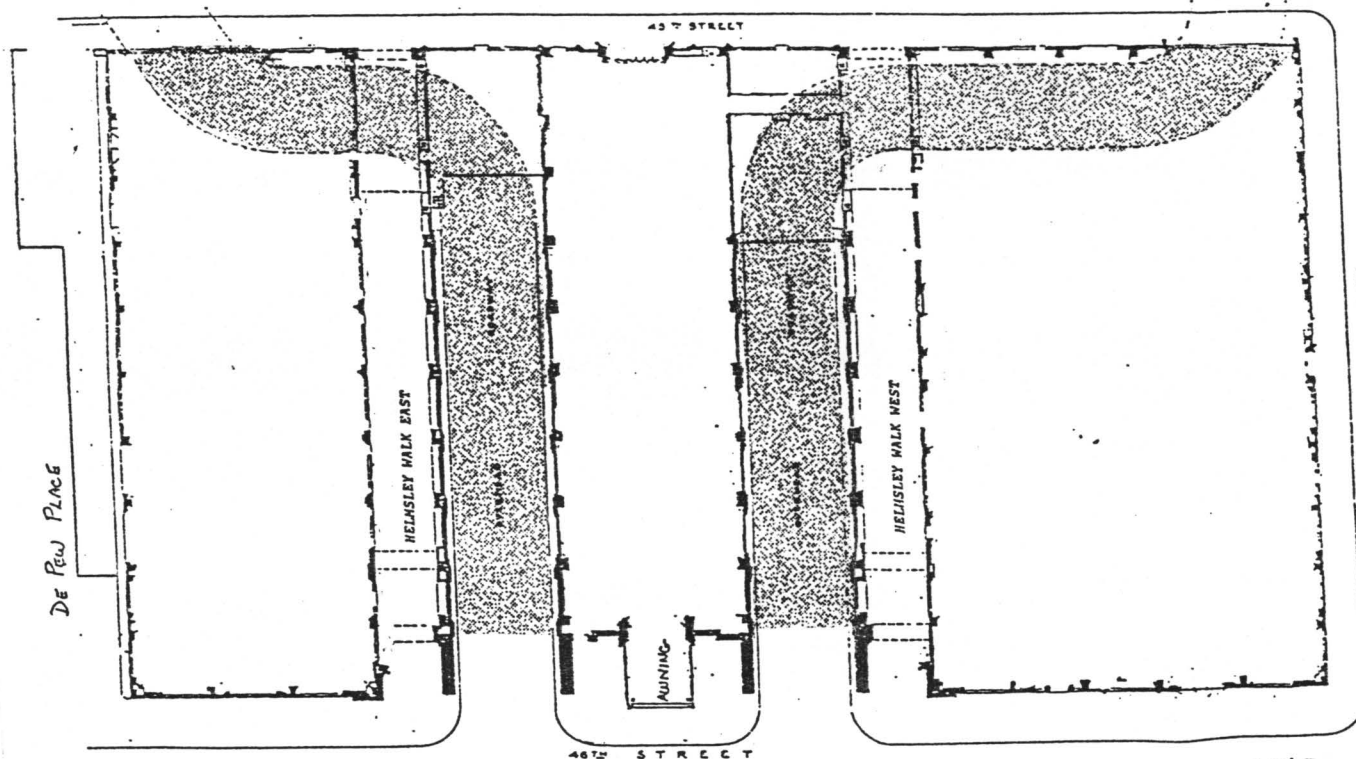
WEST ELEVATION The corridor's west wall is lined by shop fronts and display windows (and pierced by 3 service/fire doors). Although the shop fronts and display windows vary in size, they all appear to have originally conformed to the tripartite configuration illustrated on the following page (exception: Bay F). The configuration is similar to that on the building's 4 facade's but reduced in scale and varied in detail. In their original configuration shop fronts appear to have had their doors located on the right or left of the bay. Shop fronts with central doors appear to be altered from original display windows.

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR (HELMSLEY WALK WEST)

BY	GRANITE BULKHEAD	DISPLAY WINDOW/SHOP FRONT	SCULPTURAL FRIEZE	SECONDARY TRANSOM	COMMENTS
	Intact	Window: 1 modern glass pane; no muntins/transom	Intact	Intact	Variation: Bay is reduced in width but double-height; above the secondary transom are two three-over-three double-hung steel sash (mez. level)
	Intact	Same as in Bay A	Intact	Intact	Same as in Bay A
		Metal door with single-pane glazed transom (painted)	-	- -	
		Modern double glass doors installed in central bay; Mullions and muntins intact; central section of transom obscured by projecting signage	Intact		Ventilation louvres installed in side lights; central light painted; window heads obscured. See "West Elevation" on preceding page for probable alteration
		Modern double glass doors installed at left; muntins & mullions intact; center & right transom panes have ventilation louvres; left pane obscured by modern signage; modern side gate on doors	Intact		Intact (painted) Window heads obscured
	Intact	Window: 1 modern glass pane; no muntin/transom; modern side gate installed	Intact	Intact (single-pane; painted)	Variation: reduced bay size: only central panel of tri-partite configuration
	Intact	Window: Side lights & side transoms intact Central light: 1 modern glass pane (no transom); modern side gates installed	Intact		Side lights intact (painted); 2 additional mullions in central pane (painted); window heads obscured
		1 single-leaf modern glass door installed at left center; aside from bulkhead, no original elements visible; secondary transom possibly consealed behind wall; See "West Elevation" on preceding page for probable alteration			
		Metal door with metal-sealed transom	-	-	
		1 single-leaf modern glass door (deeply recessed); side gate installed on wall plane	-	-	
		2 deeply recessed bronze-framed glass doors at left; original muntins/mullions; side gates installed over shop window			Signage band intact, but no ornament on frieze; crowning sculpture and windows totally obscured by dropped ceiling
		2 original deeply recessed bronze-framed glass doors; 1 bronze-capped step down from grade of corridor; doors crowned by bronze lintel; downlight band; small bronze sign on either jamb (inscription: "230//PARK//AVE//[arrow]")			
		1 single-leaf metal door (slightly recessed)	-	-	



VEHICULAR TUNNELS



The New York Central Building is pierced by two vehicular tunnels located on either side of the main entrance. Southbound traffic enters the building through a triple-story arch (with coffered intrados) on the west side of the 46th Street facade. Traffic continues through the building on a curved and banked roadway before exiting on a viaduct cantilevered over 45th Street. The tunnel's stone walls are articulated by large recessed panels with foliate keystones. From the east wall project five decorative metal light fixtures (currently not illuminated); two matching fixtures project from the west wall.

The eastern tunnel is identical to that on the west with the following exceptions:

- northbound traffic enters the building from the 45th street bridge and exits through the arched entrance on 45th Street.
- Four light fixtures project from the west wall; two from the east.

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 New York Central Building/now Helmsley Building has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the New York Central Building/now Helmsley Building survives as an integral part of the planned enclave known as Terminal City; that as part of that enclave it comprises one of the finest legacies of the City Beautiful Movement in New York; that with a distinction all but unique in grid-patterned Manhattan, the building is as compelling at street level as it is on the skyline; that, erected astride Park Avenue and allowing pedestrian and vehicular traffic to flow through its base, the building has a unique honeycombed character; that it was designed to complement Grand Central Terminal and functions as a bridge to the depot rather than a barrier across Park Avenue; that it develops some of the most innovative circulation systems of Grand Central Terminal, presenting an excellent example of axial Beaux-Arts planning; that its creation provided an effective relief to traffic around Grand Central Terminal and, by thus contributing to the public good, it was hailed as a model of corporate and municipal cooperation; that construction of the building over double-level live railroad tracks was an extraordinary engineering achievement; that, designed as corporate headquarters for the New York Central Railroad, it reflected the railroad's prominence in the early twentieth century both through symbolic imagery and through the imposing character of the tower itself; that the building was the final design executed for the railroad by Warren & Wetmore, architects of much of Terminal City; and that, as the lynchpin of Terminal City and visible from afar, it is a conspicuous urban focus and one of the most recognizable and most admired skyscrapers in New York.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the New York Central Building/now Helmsley Building, 230 Park Avenue, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1300, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan as its Landmark Site.

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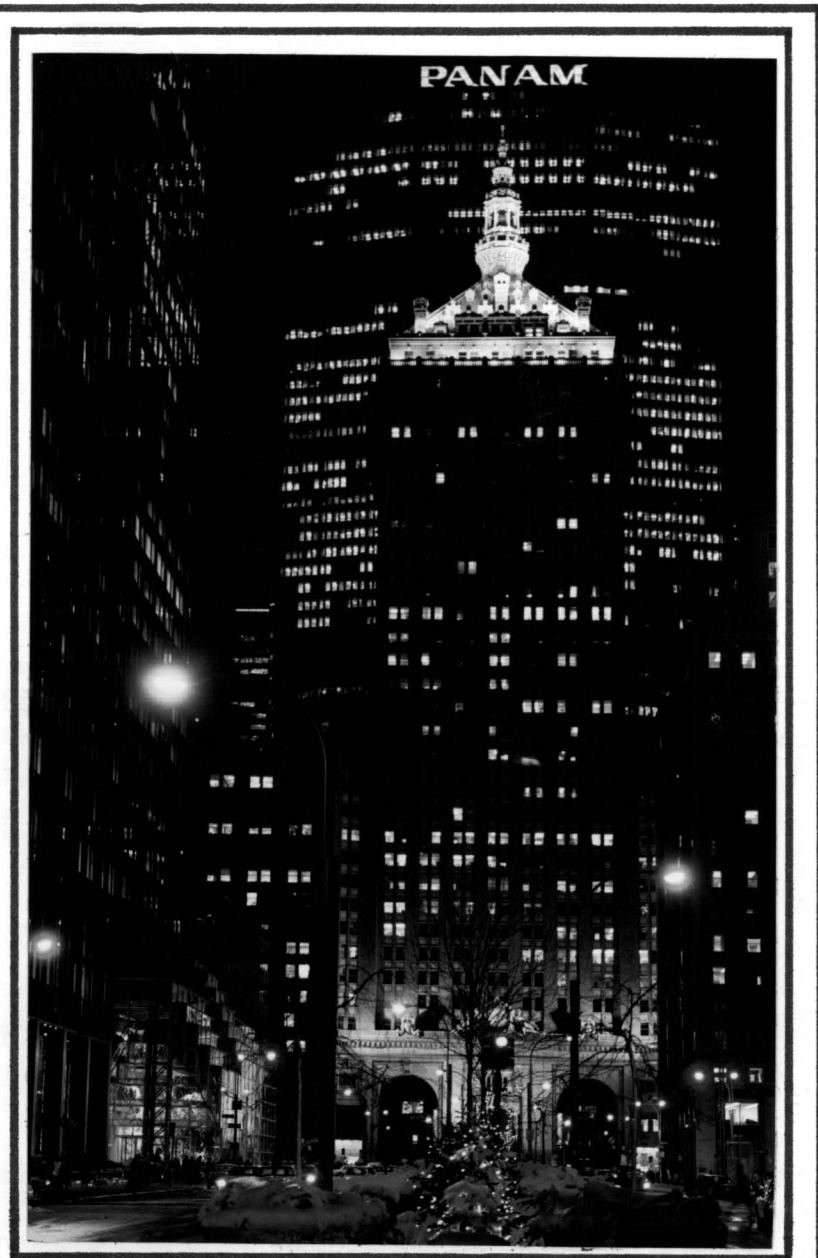


Photo credit: Janet Adams

New York Central Building/Helmsley Building
230 Park Avenue, Manhattan
Views south along Park Avenue



Detail: Clock at center of 45th St. facade
(See p. 13 n31 for description)

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New York Central Building/Helmsley Building
230 Park Avenue, Manhattan



New York Central Building/Helmsley Building
230 Park Avenue, Manhattan

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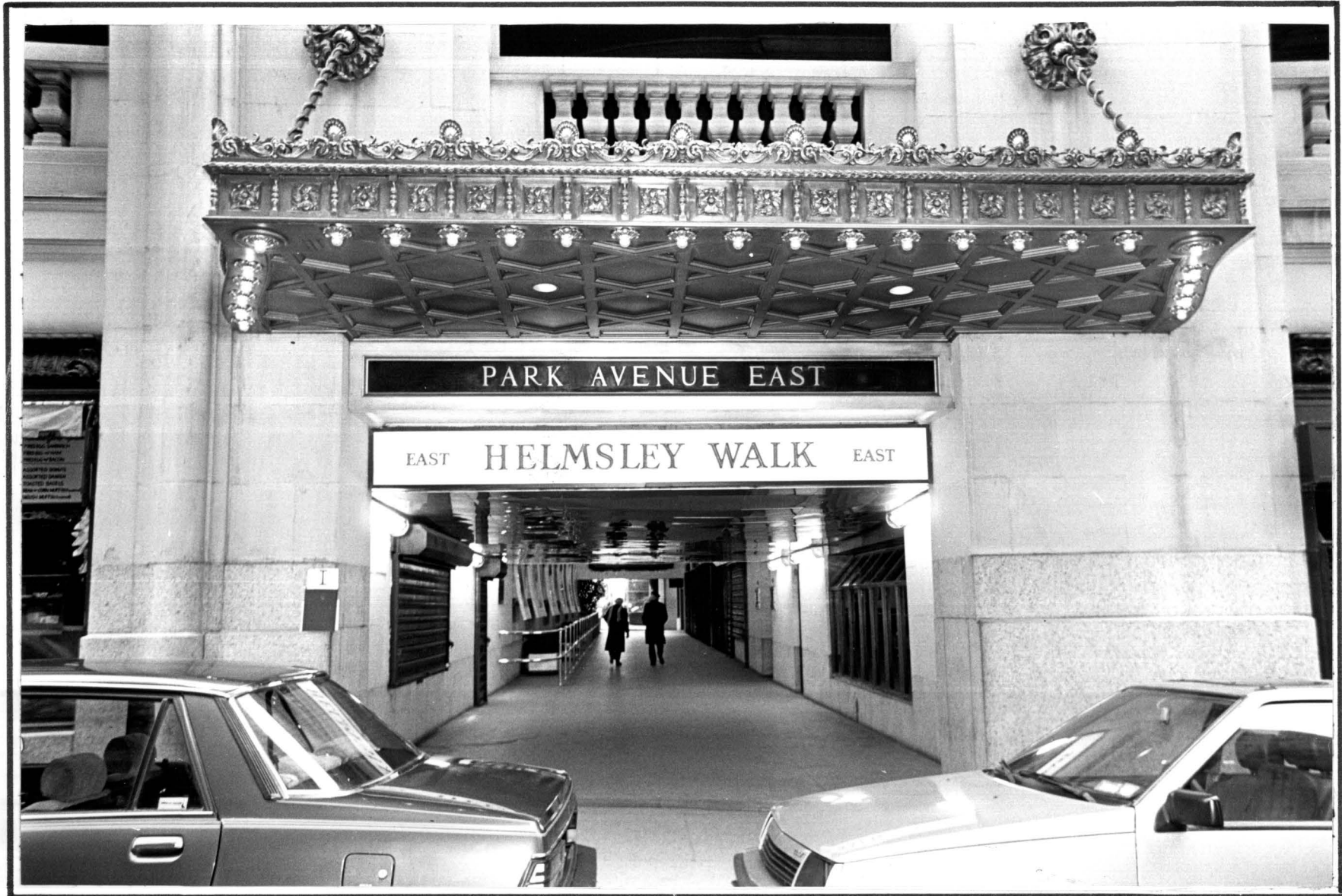
Detail: Cupola from above; view north



Detail: 45th Street facade from eastern viaduct

Photo credit:
Janet Adams

New York Central Building/Helmsley Building
230 Park Avenue, Manhattan



Detail: Pedestrian corridor/Helmsley Walk East
View north from 45th Street facade

Photo credit:
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New York Central Building/Helmsley Building
230 Park Avenue, Manhattan