

The Roosevelt Building



The Roosevelt Building

LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan
841 Broadway

(aka 837 Broadway; 837-847 Broadway;
53-63 East 13th Street)

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

Prominently situated on the northwest corner of Broadway and East 13th Street, the Roosevelt Building is an outstanding example of the high-rise commercial development that occurred south of Union Square during the late-19th century using innovative new technology such as elevators, electricity, and metal framing. Built in 1893-94, the transitional Romanesque Revival/Renaissance Revival-style building is also historically significant for housing the Biograph Company, which advanced early filmmaking technology and became one of the first and most recognized American film studios.



The Roosevelt Building, 841 Broadway, 1899, New York Public Library

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Lisa Kersavage, Executive Director
Mark Silberman, General Counsel
Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research
Cory Herrala, Director of Preservation

REPORT BY

MaryNell Nolan-Wheatley, Research Department

EDITED BY

Kate Lemos McHale and Margaret Herman

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

LPC Research Staff

COMMISSIONERS

Sarah Carroll, Chair
Frederick Bland, Vice Chair
Diana Chapin
Wellington Chen
Michael Devonshire
Michael Goldblum
John Gustafsson
Anne Holford-Smith
Jeanne Lutfy
Adi Shamir-Baron

The Roosevelt Building

841 Broadway, Manhattan

Designation List 512

LP-2620

Built: 1893-94

Architect: Stephen Decatur Hatch

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 565, Lot 15 in part, consisting of the land beneath the building's footprint, as shown on the attached map

Calendared: September 25, 2018

Public Hearing: December 4, 2018

On September 25, 2018 the Landmarks Preservation Commission calendared the Roosevelt Building as part of a cluster of buildings on Broadway between East 12th and East 13th Streets, identified based on individual merit and elevated by the intact historic character of the group.

On December 4, 2018 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Roosevelt Building as a New York City Landmark, and on the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. At its public hearing on December 4, 2018, eleven people, including representatives of the owner, the Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, and the East Village Community Coalition, and six individuals, spoke in favor of the proposed designation.¹ The commission received ten written submissions in support of the proposed designation, including from Councilmember Carlina Rivera,

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, State Senators Brad Hoylman and Liz Krueger, and State Assemblymember Deborah Glick, as well as representatives of the Municipal Art Society of New York, the Victorian Society of New York, the Society for the Architecture of the City, and two individuals. The commission received one written submission in opposition to designation.

Summary

The Roosevelt Building

The Roosevelt Building, located on Broadway at East 13th Street, is a notable store and loft building that originally contained garment-related businesses as well as the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, constructed during a time when Broadway south of Union Square was transforming into a commercial area with high-rise buildings. Architect Stephen D. Hatch designed the eight-story Roosevelt Building in 1893-94 for James A. Roosevelt and Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, who, together with other members of the Roosevelt family, formed the Broadway Improvement Company to oversee their real estate ventures. Heirs of the wealthy merchant Cornelius V.S. Roosevelt, the owners would soon become better known as President Theodore Roosevelt's uncles.

Hatch started his career as a draftsman in the office of John B. Snook and by 1864 had established his own architectural practice in New York City, designing commercial buildings, hotels, and residences. He died suddenly in August 1894, just months after the Roosevelt Building was completed.

The striking transitional Romanesque Revival/Renaissance Revival-style, iron- and steel-frame building has a tripartite configuration that includes a two-story rusticated stone base with upper sections clad in Roman brick and elaborate terra-cotta ornamentation. A column topped with a copper cupola anchors the building's southeast corner. In addition to having three elevators and electric lighting, the building was purported to be fireproof, although that claim was proved false after a devastating fire in 1903 engulfed the upper stories.

Broadway south of Union Square became a hub for the city's garment industry at the turn of the 20th century. Taller store and loft buildings with metal framing systems were constructed to accommodate factories and showrooms associated with the industry. Clothing manufacturers, such as Hackett, Carhart & Company, were the primary tenants of the Roosevelt Building during this period. The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, later renamed the Biograph Company, was also a tenant from 1896 to c. 1906, establishing their first film studio atop the roof on a rotating track to optimize use of natural sunlight. The Mutoscope film-viewing machine and the Biograph projector, two of the company's inventions, significantly improved the quality and accessibility of the moving picture. Circa 1906, Biograph moved to 11 East 14th Street and continued to garner increasing success and recognition for its directors, cameramen, and actors, some of whom emerged as the biggest names in America's early film industry.

In 2007, The Roosevelt Building was restored: the copper cornice was replaced, masonry cleaned, and damaged terra-cotta was replicated. The building retains a high level of integrity and remains an exquisite and intact element of Broadway's streetscape, representative of New York City's early high-rise commercial development, and America's film history.

Building Description

The Roosevelt Building

Description

The Roosevelt Building is an eight-story, transitional Romanesque Revival/Renaissance Revival-style store and loft designed by Stephen Decatur Hatch between 1893 and 1894. Elements of the Romanesque Revival include its heavy rusticated stonework and corbelled brick masonry, broad arches, a narrow corner tower, decorative spiral columns, and foliated ornamentation. Its symmetrical, tripartite facades, classically-inspired pilasters and ornamentation, and rusticated base with smooth brick upper stories are also characteristic of the Renaissance Revival style.

Located on the corner of Broadway and East 13th Street, just south of Union Square, the iron- and steel-frame building has an irregular quadrilateral shape, with fully developed tripartite primary facades fronting Broadway (east) and East 13th Street (south). A two-story rusticated stone base supports a four-story shaft, and a two-story crown. The shaft and crown are clad with iron-spot Roman brick in various shades of orange and trimmed with intricate terra-cotta decoration. Although the primary facades are very similar in appearance, the Broadway facade, which is visually dominated by a second-story, central arch (over the former entrance) and a row of arched windows with projecting iron bays along the shaft, is slightly grander and more embellished than the south facade. At the corner between the two primary facades is a brick column crowned with a copper cupola, emphasizing the edifice's prominent corner location.

Detailed examination of the building reveals

layers of intertwining and overlapping terra cotta ornamentation clustered primarily on the pilaster capitals and in undulate bands along the intermediate cornices that project above the second, sixth, and eighth stories on both designed facades. Though much of the ornamentation is classically-inspired in form, it is enhanced with a multitude of references to ancient mythology – lions, humans wearing lion heads, dragon-like monsters, gods, and half-beings with the body of a beast or human and tails of a sea creature – set within a backdrop of wild, swirling foliage. Typical of Renaissance architecture, several types of faces adorn the facades.² Their particularly evocative expressions likely reference versions of Bacchus, the Roman god of debauchery, since they are often surrounded by vines and grapes. The faces include: a menacing, horned demon-like figure with a threatening expression; a more jovial character with an open mouth and cascading curls on head and face; and a grave face with prominent features and a full beard. Other faces on the facade display various combinations of these features.

Alterations to the building are primarily concentrated along the first-story commercial spaces, including the addition of modern signage, storefront infill, and the removal of the original main entrance. Otherwise the building retains a high level of integrity and looks remarkably similar to its appearance in the 1890s.

Broadway (East) Facade

Multi-story classical pilasters separate the bays on the symmetrical, five-bay, east facade facing Broadway, with arcaded windows topping the building's shaft and crown. The center of the two-story granite base includes a coffered, terra-cotta arch marking the location of the former entrance, which is now infilled with modern alterations. A face ornaments the keystone, and the spandrels feature leaf scrollwork framing the building's monogram

stamped on two shields, an “R” and “B” on the right and left sides respectively. Windows in a non-original configuration fit within the bend of the arch. Stone pilasters on the base’s second story have Composite terra-cotta capitals with pearled volutes and an acanthus leaf pattern. Faces and leaf scrollwork adorn the two central pilasters. The outer four bays on the second story contain three, one-over-one sash windows each, divided by narrow metal colonnettes with truncated Composite capitals. A cornice projects above the two-story base and includes mascarons, leaf scrollwork, and cabochons on shields. Centered on the second-story cornice, just above the arched entryway are the address numbers 841.

The four-story shaft includes six, four-story Roman brick pilasters with terra cotta Corinthian capitals separating the bays. Each bay is topped with an arch and encompasses the third- to sixth-story windows. The volutes on the capitals are half beast, half sea creature, arching over a bed of acanthus leaves with tails bound together in the center. Attached to the pilasters on the third story are terra-cotta panels with classical pediments containing a festoon. The central two panels feature two mermaids with foliated tails, facing each other and conjointly holding a torch with an arrangement of leaves and vines; a face is centered on the panels on the outer pilasters. Four double-hung sash windows are located within each bay on the third story, and are separated by narrow spiral, engaged terra-cotta columns.

The fourth- to sixth-story windows have cast iron surrounds with a subtly projecting bay on the fifth story. Three angled sides form the projecting bay: two windows in the center and one window on each angled side. The fourth-story windows are separated by iron pilasters topped with brackets cast with human faces wearing a lion’s head that support the overhang of the projecting bay above. Low iron

cresting rises above the projecting bays creating a shallow balcony below the arched window openings on the sixth story. Terra-cotta relief details adorn the arches, faces ornament the keystones, and triangular spandrels flanking the arches feature cabochons surrounded by leaf scrollwork.

An intermediate bracketed terra-cotta cornice divides the shaft of the tripartite facade from the crown, and features acanthus leaf brackets, scrolled panels, dentils, an egg and dart pattern, and lion-head water spouts. The coffered underside of the cornice includes terra-cotta rosettes. Two-story Roman brick pilasters with Composite capitals separate the bays along the crown of the tripartite, which is less ornamented than the shaft. The two central pilasters feature an arched niche containing faces. An arcaded corbel table extends across the top of the facade, just below a replacement copper cornice. Each bay within the crown includes four windows; the windows on the eighth story are arched.

Alterations

Modern storefronts and all infill on first story; commercial signage on first and second stories; central main building entrance infill; first story pilasters removed changing vertical rhythm of piers on facade; replacement windows throughout; rectangular windows in arched window openings on eighth story; roofline balustrade removed; replacement copper cornice.

Southeast Corner

At the building’s southeast corner, starting at the second story and rising above the roof-top cornice, is a rounded, engaged column. Like the primary facades, the column is divided into a tripartite configuration with a rusticated stone base and Roman brick shaft and crown. Intermediate cornices from the Broadway facade wrap around the column to extend along the East 13th Street facade. Below

each cornice on the corner column is a capital to match the pilaster capitals on the primary facades.

Along the shaft, at the top of the third story, the column features a decorative terra-cotta shield ornament enriched with scrolls, festoons, and leaf motifs. Smooth bands of terra-cotta tiles mark the column at the fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth stories. At the top of the column is a domed “bee-hive” copper cupola with a fish scale pattern. A copper orb rises from the center of the dome, and forms the building’s pinnacle.

Alterations

Rusticated stone pier at first story removed in 1927; now built of concrete.

East 13th Street (South) Facade

The primary south facade facing East 13th Street, which contains five full bays and a narrow partial bay on the far west end, is a simplified version of the Broadway facade. The overall tripartite configuration of the two facades is nearly identical and the projecting intermediate cornices feature the same terra-cotta ornamentation previously described for the Broadway facade.

A few differences between the facades are apparent. The base of the south facade has been less altered by commercial modifications than the Broadway facade. The stone pilasters extend all the way to the ground and the original window openings remain largely intact; narrow pilasters separate the paired first-story commercial windows and feature vertical foliated ornamentation and brackets with shields and small delicate faces.

Above the base in the **shaft**, four of the five full bays on the south facade do not feature the projecting iron bays found on the Broadway facade. The far east bay located on East 13th Street at Broadway is identical to the bays on the Broadway facade, with an iron bay projecting at the fifth story.

The remaining bays on the south facade’s shaft contain three windows (as opposed to four windows on the Broadway facade) on each story, with simpler brick surrounds. The arches on the East 13th Street facade’s sixth story, which encompass four windows separated by iron pilasters, are simplified with plain terra-cotta tiles and a face adorning the keystone.

On the crown, the pilasters flanking the central bay on the East 13th Street facade are also slightly simplified, with corbeled arches but no face positioned in the niche.

The narrow bay at the far west end of the East 13th Street facade is only one window wide, but maintains the same tripartite configuration and ornamentation patterns as the adjacent bays.

Alterations

Historic metal grilles in the four center bays of the lower section of the first story replaced with glass; in center bay, first-story window sill moved up and cast-iron framing was removed to allow creation of an entrance; commercial signage on first and second stories; replacement commercial windows and louvered vents on first and second stories; replacement windows throughout; rectangular windows in arched window openings on eighth story; roofline balustrade removed; replacement copper cornice; replacement pedestrian entrance on far west end with transom replaced with opaque boards, a louvered vent, and an air conditioning unit.

Roof Alterations

Biograph’s rotating film studio removed; rooftop apartment for building’s chief engineer c. 1903 removed.

Site History

The Roosevelt Building

Development of Broadway South of Union Square³

New York City was established as the nation's most important commercial center after the opening of the Erie Canal in the 1820s and the construction of numerous railroads beginning in the 1830s. The southern tip of Manhattan became the city's first exclusively commercial district. This in combination with a rapid increase in the city's population – from 125,000 in 1820 to surpassing a half million by 1850 – resulted in the creation of new residential neighborhoods further north, with the affluent citizenry driving much of this movement.

This residential shift northward was also aided by the creation of public parks. The Commissioners' Plan of 1811 drew a square from 10th Street to 17th Street over the acute angle formed by the "union" of Bloomingdale Road (now Broadway) and the Bowery Road. In 1815, by an act of the State Legislature, this potter's field and squatters' encampment became Union Place with 14th Street as its southern extent. The site was authorized as a public place by the State Legislature in 1831, acquired by the City of New York in 1833, and opened to the public in 1839. By the 1850s, through the encouragement of Gramercy Park developer Samuel Ruggles, Union Place was surrounded with the elegant residences of the elite, including Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt, a wealthy merchant who owned a mansion on the corner of 14th Street and Broadway, and who will be discussed later in this report.

Commerce followed the residential trend

northward along Broadway. Store and loft buildings originated in the early-19th century as merchants and real estate speculators began to build structures in Manhattan specially to satisfy the commercial needs of the growing city, which was then developing into the country's major port and trading center.

Commercial development pushed up Broadway, supplanting prime residential areas which were reestablished further to the north. This growth accelerated in the 1850s when, Manhattan's "dry goods" district, which included fabrics, garments, and related items, was approaching the section of Broadway north of Houston Street. Broadway was redeveloped first, followed at a slower pace by its surrounding streets

Theaters, hotels, and upscale retailers that had spread northward along the Bowery and Broadway proliferated in the 1870s and Union Place became Union Square, the center of New York City's most important shopping, entertainment, and hotel district. The expansion of retail activities and the entertainment district – from 10th to 23rd streets and from 6th Avenue to Broadway – drove the elite residential enclaves further north, to Madison Square, and later closer to Central Park. In the last decades of the 19th century, retailers followed the relocation of the elite north to the area between Union and Madison squares that became known as Ladies' Mile.

By the 1890s, the area around Union Square was undergoing a commercial transformation. A construction boom produced taller store and loft buildings, such as the Roosevelt Building, that replaced residences and catered to the needs of manufacturers or publishers. Shops, theaters, and hotels also relocated further north to Midtown to be closer to the newly completed Pennsylvania Station (1904-1910), Grand Central Terminal (1903-1913), and residential districts uptown. New construction technologies, such as iron and steel interior framing,

curtain wall construction, and improved passenger and freight elevators enabled the construction of buildings that were taller and fire-resistant, with increased amounts of usable interior space. Although the Roosevelt Building stopped at eight stories, some of these buildings went as high as 12 or more stories.

After 1910, commercial areas south of 14th Street began to face increasing competition for tenants by newly-developing districts uptown, with high-quality garment makers and their suppliers preferring to locate to these areas. The decline continued in the years following World War I. Loft floors were subdivided, used for storage, or left empty.

The Roosevelts in New York City

The Roosevelt name has become synonymous with American politics, thanks to Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose presidencies defined the early- and mid-20th centuries respectively.⁴ However, the family's legacy of success in business and real estate started in New York City decades prior.

The Roosevelts were among the earliest settlers in New Amsterdam (later New York City), arriving from the Netherlands in the early-17th century. Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt was born in New York City in 1794, the son of James Jacobus Roosevelt and Maria Van Schaack. His father ran a hardware business at 94 Maiden Lane, and when the time came, Cornelius became a partner in the family company. By the mid-19th century, the company, Roosevelt and Son, emerged as a successful importer of plate glass, reaping Cornelius a healthy fortune. In 1821, Cornelius married Margaret Barnhill Roosevelt and together they had six sons: Theodore, Sr., Robert Barnwell, James A., Cornelius Van Schaack, Jr., William Wallace, and Silas Weir.

As many other wealthy families were also moving north towards Union Square, Cornelius

purchased land at foreclosure c. 1842 along Broadway between East 14th and East 13th streets.⁵ He constructed a mansion at the corner of Broadway and East 14th Street, with gardens extending behind.⁶ A famous photo taken during President Lincoln's funeral procession along Broadway in 1865 depicts the Roosevelt mansion in the background. According to legend, a young Theodore Roosevelt, Cornelius' grandson, can be seen sitting in the window with his brother, Elliott.⁷

Several of Cornelius' sons joined the family business and he officially retired in 1865. In 1871, Cornelius died at his summer home in Oyster Bay, Long Island. His obituary was published in *The New York Times* on July 18, describing him as a "highly-respected merchant of New York...essentially a merchant of the old school, and highly esteemed by every one [sic] with whome [sic] he was brought in contact." The piece also notes that in addition to "amass[ing] a fortune of many millions" he was "also very benevolent and gave away the greater part of his income to benevolent objects."⁸

The family's house on Broadway was razed after Cornelius' death. Years after its demolition, the mansion was described in *The New York Times* as "almost the last of the Broadway mansions to give way to the march of business."⁹ Cornelius' heirs retained ownership of the property, forming the Broadway Improvement Company for their future real estate endeavors that would take advantage of Broadway's shift from a residential enclave for the wealthy to a commercial strip. In 1873, the Roosevelt family constructed the Domestic Sewing Machine Co. Building (now demolished) at the corner of East 14th Street and Broadway.¹⁰ The Second Empire-style, cast iron building was designed by Griffith Thomas and stood out prominently on the block.¹¹ A historic Bromley map indicates that by 1891 a row of three buildings had been constructed on the southern end of the Roosevelt property, where the residence's

gardens once stood at the corner of East 13th Street and Broadway.¹² These buildings were occupied by six stores on the ground floor.¹³

Stephen Decatur Hatch (Architect)¹⁴

Architect Stephen D. Hatch was born in Swanton, Vermont, in 1839 and settled in New York where, in 1860, he joined the architectural office of John B. Snook, a leading architect with one of the largest practices in the city during the 19th century. He spent four years in Snook's office as a draftsman.

By 1864 Hatch had established his own architectural practice in New York City, designing primarily commercial buildings, hotels, and residences. After Snook, Hatch spent three lean years between 1864 and 1867 while the economy began to recover from the ravages of the Civil War. As building activity resumed, he began to acquire a reputable practice designing first class brownstone row houses in Murray Hill and in the 40s near Fifth Avenue. For Hatch, the prestigious new assignment to design the cast-iron-fronted Gilsey House, a designated New York City Landmark, established his reputation as an architect of important commercial structures.

During his 30 year career, Hatch designed a number of imposing domestic and commercial buildings in a wide variety of styles. He designed numerous buildings located within New York City Historic Districts, including the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, the Tribeca West Historic District, the NoHo Historic District (notably including the Robbins and Appleton Building constructed in 1879-90, a designated New York City Landmark), and the South Village Historic District.

Hatch died suddenly in August 1894, just months after completing the Roosevelt Building. The New York Life Insurance Building at 346 Broadway (1894-99, a designated New York City Landmark)

was designed by Hatch and finished after his death by McKim, Mead and White.

Construction and Design of the Roosevelt Building

On January 26, 1893, *The New York Times* announced a "New Building for Broadway" at the corner of East 13th Street: "Members of the Roosevelt family have formed a corporation for the purpose of erecting an eight-story office building on the northwest corner of Broadway and Thirteenth Street."¹⁵ The property was an irregular shape, measuring 125 feet along Broadway and East 13th Street, with a depth of 88 feet from Broadway. Cornelius' sons, James A. and Robert Barnwell, served as the principal owners while other members of the family, namely W. Emlen Roosevelt, James Roosevelt, and Frank Roosevelt, provided additional investments. The article described the proposed building:

The structure, which will be completed by the first of next year, will be fire-proof throughout. The walls will be of brick, red granite, and terra cotta, and there will be a large red granite arched entrance on Broadway. The frame of the building will be of steel, and the plan of construction will be a modification of that which has been adopted in Chicago in large office structures. The building will cost about \$500,000.¹⁶

In February, plans and specifications for construction of the new building were entered at the Building Department.¹⁷ Stephen Decatur Hatch was listed as the project's architect, and his designs included modern amenities such as three elevators and electric lighting. An article in the *New-York Daily Tribune*

also highlighted the inclusion of “five iron bronze bays [that] will run across the front” of the building on Broadway.¹⁸

The Roosevelt Building appears to be an example of a hybrid construction type, not unusual during the late-19th century, where iron and steel were simultaneously employed in the framing system. While *The New York Times* announcement from January 1893 referred to the building’s steel frame, subsequent descriptions of the building included in local newspapers described the building’s iron columns and girders, suggesting that both metals were used in the building’s construction.¹⁹ In 1903, the *Real Estate Record and Builder’s Guide* noted that the “architect used fire-proof arches,” which appears to refer to a type of fireproof floor construction popular primarily between the 1870s and 1910s. The technique involved covering metal beams with terra-cotta tile arch floors, which could withstand a certain amount of heat in addition to substantial weight.²⁰

Hatch’s design for the store and loft building embraced its corner location with two nearly identical and fully articulated, tripartite facades on the east and south facades. The warm, honey-tones of the Roman brick is enhanced with a riot of terra cotta detailing, concentrated on the intermediate cornices and multi-story, engaged column capitals. Foliated designs create an organic background for haunting, animated faces and mythological half-figures – mermaid torsos emerging from inverted foliage cups and beasts with sea creature tails.

The prominent arched fenestration, particularly within the four-story shaft, and the arcaded corbel table strongly reflects the Romanesque Revival style, which became popular in the 1870s and 1880s largely as a result of the bold masonry designs of Henry Hobson Richardson. The prominent fenestration and arches highlight the open interior loft spaces on the upper floors that were

originally used for garment manufacturing and storage.

The classically-inspired ornamentation, however, is airy, delicate, and crisp, lacking the weight and mass typical of the Romanesque Revival style. A two-story rusticated stone base grounds the building, but gives way to a bright, smooth, Roman brick facade on the stories above. The formalism of the symmetrical facades, with pilasters, terra-cotta foliage, and the original roof-line balustrade (no longer extant) is more typical of the Renaissance Revival style, another revivalist style that was popularized towards the end of the 19th century.

Otto N. Eidlitz of Marc (or Mark) Eidlitz & Son served as the builder for the new structure.²¹ Marc Eidlitz was a mason and builder in New York City who became prominent between 1854 and 1888. His sons, Otto and R.J. assumed management of the family business, which “continued as one of the city’s most active builders well into the 1930s.”²² Soil on site for the Roosevelt Building was a mixture of clay and sand, with rock only located towards the center of the property, approximately 35 to 40 feet from the sidewalk. This posed a challenge for construction. Eidlitz’s solution was to “float” the building by creating an “artificial ‘bottom’ . . . from seventeen to nineteen feet below the surface” in those areas where rock was found.²³ Construction started in spring of 1893 and was completed a year later, in the spring of 1894.

The Garment Industry and Early Skyscraper Construction

American garment manufacturing flourished rapidly during the 19th century, “sudden and wild, like an economic tornado.”²⁴ Several factors contributed to this abrupt boom, including: the invention of the lock-stitch sewing machine in the 1840s; the demand for large quantities of standardized uniforms for Union soldiers during the Civil War; the creation of

the “cutter’s knife” in the 1870s; and the influx of Hungarian, Russian, and Polish immigrants, many of whom were skilled tailors. By the early-20th century, “more New York immigrants worked in clothing factories than in any other business, and the industry was doubling in size every decade.”²⁵

Workers in the garment industry were often independent contractors themselves, or were hired by independent contractors, who in turn were employed by large manufacturers, to assemble garments. These sweatshop operations were frequently housed in cramped tenements, crammed into living quarters and hallways.²⁶ However, increased regulations starting in 1892 limited the types of legal locations for manufacturing and the proliferation of the taller store and loft buildings, like the Roosevelt Building, provided more appealing accommodations for companies.²⁷ David Von Drehle, the author of *Triangle: The Fire That Changed America*, argues that, in fact, “the coming of the steel-framed high-rise suddenly and completely changed the economics of New York manufacturing.”²⁸

Limitations on space in urban centers and the rising cost of property values encouraged builders to construct taller buildings, a feat made possible by several significant 19th-century innovations that enabled the construction of these early skyscrapers, such as the Roosevelt Building. The introduction of elevators, of which the Roosevelt Building had three, expanded a building’s vertical potential, and electricity allowed for interior lighting as well as access to power for manufacturing machinery.²⁹ One of the most significant advancements in constructing taller buildings, however, was the introduction of iron as a building material, which occurred as early as the late-18th century in Europe. Cast iron handled compression better than wood or stone, but proved insufficient in resisting tension. Wrought iron, however, was first produced in England during the 1820s and “improved the material’s tensile

properties.”³⁰ In the 1830s, cast iron was introduced into American construction, first in New York and Boston; by the 1850s, wrought iron was also becoming a common American building material.³¹ Iron columns and beams, which could be much slimmer without sacrificing strength, became appealing substitutes for wood and masonry.³² As builders became more aware of the advantages of iron as a construction material, they became free to build new types of buildings. Using interior iron columns allowed for large open spaces without interior walls and with large area windows.³³

Steel was first produced in 1856, but it was not until the 1880s that the cost dropped enough to allow it to be used as a building’s primary framing material.³⁴ Cage and skeleton metal-frame construction, which were introduced c. 1885 and c. 1890, respectively, signaled some of the greatest innovations in building technology. Cage framing used an iron or steel framing system with a self-supporting masonry wall, while skeleton framing had a wrought-iron or steel frame that supported the exterior walls.³⁵ As the primary building material for taller buildings shifted from iron to steel, hybrid buildings, such as the Roosevelt Building, were also constructed, where builders experimented with iron in combination with steel, as well as mixing aspects of cage construction with skeleton construction.³⁶

For a time, metal construction was also thought of as fireproof. However, a series of prominent urban fires in the late-19th century proved that “in high heat [iron] loses its shape and bends, usually leading to a collapse of the structure.”³⁷ Steel, while stronger and more durable than iron, was also weakened when exposed to intense heat.³⁸ In response to these discoveries, laws were established in New York City during the 1890s (after construction of the Roosevelt Building) requiring a fire resistant masonry or terra-cotta casing for metal framing components.³⁹ Of course, even if a

building's frame survived, the contents of a building were still highly susceptible to conflagrations.

High rents for commercial and industrial space along Broadway produced the right economic climate for the construction of larger buildings and also spurred the development of new loft buildings.⁴⁰ As mentioned previously, speculators purchased older dwellings and commercial buildings along Broadway near Union Square during the 1890s for the construction of modern fireproof loft buildings to house these garment manufacturers and wholesale companies, as they followed the great retail stores that were also shifting northward.⁴¹ Loft buildings containing eight or more stories of expansive, empty interior spaces with high ceilings were very appealing for garment manufacturers, not because they allowed less crowded or more humane working conditions that complied with the new manufacturing regulations. Rather,

The true advantage of the lofts was much simpler: large, open rooms made it possible to attach long rows of sewing machines to a single electric motor by means of a drive shaft and flywheels. This was a huge improvement over the sweatshop, with its pedal-powered machines... The lofts also gathered the entire operation – cutting, sewing, examining, and shipping – under one roof, creating significant savings in time and transportation costs.⁴²

The taller facades of these early skyscrapers became more complex in design, usually organized into modular bays with a tripartite division of a one- or two-story base, multi-story shaft, and one- or two-story crown. Typically, ornamentation was

classically-inspired, influenced by the successful World's Columbian Exposition (1893) in Chicago and the popular City Beautiful, Beaux-Arts, and Renaissance Revival movements. This formula provided a sense of order to facades involving numerous windows, piers, spandrels, and mullions. Many of the buildings, such as the Roosevelt Building, took advantage of corner sites, having two fully articulated facades; others extended through the block; and some were punctuated by light courts.⁴³

The Roosevelt Building's Early History

After the Roosevelt Building was completed in 1894, its management almost immediately garnered criticism from the *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide*. The publication included a harsh assessment in December 1894, stating, "Penny wise and pound foolish' would seem an adage that could appropriately be quoted in connection with the management of the seemingly untenanted building on the northwest corner of Broadway and 13th street."⁴⁴ The article noted the building's high construction cost and admonished the owners for forgoing the expertise of real estate agents to arrange the leases for the interior spaces, which had "since remained entirely vacant."⁴⁵ The authors quipped that the "sign 'This Building For Rent' has almost become part of the structure itself."⁴⁶

By March of 1895, however, the building's management had successfully established several tenants, including the American Ball Nozzle Company which established their headquarters in the Roosevelt Building. Founded by C.V. Pollock, the company invented a new type of nozzle for fire hoses. Local newspapers included several in-depth features on the new nozzle, which was bell-shaped with a rubber ball loosely attached inside. The design "so spread a stream of water that it [would] be twice as effective as a solid stream."⁴⁷ As part of the product's release, the company rented the entire

ground floor of the Roosevelt Building in 1895 and held an elaborate exhibit. Half of the space was transformed into a “miniature village, with lawns and other accompaniments,” and the rest of the space was occupied by a fountain that used the ball nozzle to create an impressive spray that, apparently, could be used to extinguish fires or, more mundanely, water lawns.⁴⁸

Other innovative companies also moved into the building during its first years of operation, including The Porter Air Lighter Company.⁴⁹ But by 1903-04, most of the tenants were clothing manufacturers: the Crown Suspender Company had their factory on the third story, the Nanotuck Silk Company occupied the fourth story, the Brainard & Armstrong Silk Company occupied the fifth story and the Altman Neckwear Company occupied the sixth story. The building’s primary tenant at this time was Hackett, Carhart & Co., a men’s clothier that had their salesrooms on the first and second stories and stored their merchandise on the seventh and eighth stories.⁵⁰ The company (which is unrelated to the well-known American work-clothing company Carhartt, Inc.) was founded by Corcellus Hubbard Hackett.⁵¹ After moving to New York City in 1885, Hackett went into business with A. E. Colfax, taking over the firm of Carhart, Whitford & Co and forming Hackett, Carhart & Co.⁵² The building became largely identified with this company and was at times referred to as the Hackett, Carhart Building. Thus, the Roosevelt Building’s early history is closely tied to that of the garment industry, which was concentrated south of Union Square during the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company (1896 – c. 1906)

The most atypical tenant in the early years of the Roosevelt Building was the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, later renamed the Biograph

Company, one of the first and most prominent American film studios. The pioneering company set up its studio on the roof of the Roosevelt Building, occupying the space from 1896 to c. 1906.⁵³

The origin of the Biograph Company is intertwined with the career of the well-known inventor Thomas Edison and his lesser-known assistant William Kennedy Laurie Dickson. In the late 1880s, Edison established a research laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey in order to invent two instruments: one for recording a moving image on film, and another for viewing that film. While it was Edison’s name and company that have historically received the recognition for innovating the earliest cameras, Dickson was, in fact, responsible for these early developments; “it was Dickson, in November 1890, who devised a crude, motor-powered camera that could photograph motion pictures – called a Kinetograph.”⁵⁴ The instrument, which was the first motion-picture film camera, was cumbersome – “heavy and static, and requiring lots of light.”⁵⁵ A motor powered the Kinetograph, which used 35 millimeter film with sprocket holes along the edge to advance the roll. This would eventually become the industry standard. The next year, Dickson created the Kinetoscope, which was a prototype for a film projector, an “optical lantern viewing machine” where the film could be watched by one person at a time, peepshow-style.⁵⁶

Soon, however, Edison’s greatest asset – Dickson – would become his greatest threat. Dickson became unhappy working in the shadow of Edison’s celebrity and “frustrated with the limitations Edison placed on him” in terms of pursuing further innovations.⁵⁷ Dickson was particularly interested in creating a projector to allow films to be viewed by a multiple-person audience. As a result, Dickson decided to leave Edison’s studio in 1895 to form his own company with two other inventors, Herman Casler and Henry Norton Marvin, and their primary

investor, Elias Bernard Koopman. The new company would concentrate exclusively on producing and distributing moving pictures.⁵⁸

Marvin came up with an idea for an improved version of the Kinetoscope that was more easily transportable and would not require electricity. Further expanding on this suggestion, Dickson envisioned a “movie flip book,” and thus, the initial concept for the Mutoscope was formed.⁵⁹ Casler applied to patent the Mutoscope in November 1894.⁶⁰ The single-viewer film device functioned essentially as a flip book shaped like a rolodex. Placed in a box, the viewer could peer inside to view the picture cards, while using a crank on the side to spin the wheel, and thus creating the illusion of movement. The Mutoscope soon replaced the Edison’s Kinetoscopes in penny arcades because the Mutoscope’s film cards were larger than the Kinetoscope’s film stills and were more durable, even with heavy use.⁶¹ One wheel could hold approximately 800 to 850 picture cards, and would provide about one minute of viewing time.⁶²

To avoid infringing on Edison’s patents for the Kinetoscope and Kinetograph technology, Dickson, Casler, and Marvin created a new type of camera, the Mutograph, and consequently discovered that, in fact, using a 2 ¾ inch wide film generated a clearer image.⁶³ The first Mutoscope movie was created in June 1895 and depicted Marvin and Casler engaged in a boxing match. In December 1895, the group incorporated as the American Mutoscope Company.

The nascent company established their first studio on the roof of the Roosevelt Building in 1896.⁶⁴ Koopman had been leasing space in the building for the offices of his predecessor business, the Magic Introduction Company, making the new building a convenient choice.⁶⁵ On February 22, 1896, the *Real Estate Record and Builder’s Guide* listed alterations to the Roosevelt Building including

the installation of brick piers on the roof to “support [a] track for [a] movable platform” at a cost of \$2,000. The track, which was designed by the architect Chauncy F. Mack and constructed by the builder Hitchings & Co, rotated to follow the sun, optimizing natural light for filming.⁶⁶ This was modeled after Edison’s studio in West Orange, New Jersey. Known as Black Maria and designed by Dickson, Edison’s was the first film studio in the America and was also situated on a circular track for rotational purposes.⁶⁷ From the studio on the roof of the Roosevelt Building, The American Mutoscope Company became a prolific producer of short, loosely narrative films that documented everyday life or historical events, reenacted sensational and melodramatic scenarios, showed somewhat scandalous dancers or strip-teases, or depicted slapstick comedies. More than 4,000 film titles were produced by the company between 1897 and 1907 on approximately 100,000 reels.⁶⁸ In addition to studio work, Biograph cameramen traveled around the city and world taking footage of important people including presidents and the Pope, gaining the studio recognition for its “quick glimpses of extraordinary circumstances, far-off locales, and fantastic sights.”⁶⁹

Also in 1896, the company introduced the Biograph projector, shifting the film viewing experience from a solitary one to a group audience: “With this projector, the commercial motion-picture theater became a reality.”⁷⁰ The Biograph’s image was 70 millimeters, both larger and of higher quality than Edison’s 35 millimeter image. The company’s films, which were becoming longer and more narratively complex, were the most watched of any of the early American film studios and the Biograph projector became ubiquitous in vaudeville theaters throughout America.⁷¹

During this time, G.W. “Billy” Bitzer, an engineer, emerged as the company’s primary cameraman and cinematographer. In September

1896, Bitzer traveled to Canton, Ohio, to document William McKinley in a moving picture, thus becoming the first person to film a president. In 1899, the company changed its name to the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, signaling a shift in their marketing and product focus.⁷²

The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company's significant early contributions to advancing filmmaking technology occurred while they were tenants of the Roosevelt Building, and therefore are linked to that location. The film company's success continued to increase during the early-20th century and Biograph became one of the most prosperous studios of the era.⁷³ Despite its success, the studio's rooftop location was not necessarily ideal. As film historian Paul Spehr points out, "The rooftop in New York City which was the company's shooting stage had some inherent limitations, particularly in the winter. If it was cold, stormy, or even gray and overcast, the rooftop became unusable since controlled, consistent, strong light was vital for production."⁷⁴

Circa 1906, the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company moved to a new studio at 11 East 14th Street, which was subsequently demolished in the 1960s.⁷⁵ At its new location, the company became the first to use a studio entirely lit by artificial light.⁷⁶ In 1908, the company was renamed simply The Biograph Company (referred to as Biograph) in 1908.⁷⁷

The director D.W. Griffith was also hired in 1908 to work in the new studio on East 14th Street. Working closely with cameraman Bitzer, he made 450 films at Biograph between 1908 and 1913 and discovered some of the most prominent silent screen stars of the era, including Mary Pickford, Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Blanche Sweet, Mack Sennett, and Lionel Barrymore, many of whom became famous as members of the Biograph Stock Company.⁷⁸ As

Griffith's pictures became longer, more narratively complex, and increasingly expensive, "eventually, Griffith's ambitions outgrew Biograph's." He left the studio in 1913, which closed in 1916. Although film historians and critics consider Griffith an innovator of filming techniques, "the man who worked out the language of film storytelling," his career is also unquestionably problematic, defined by aggressively racist and xenophobic films, most notably *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) which he made after leaving Biograph. As film critic David Thomson noted in discussing Griffith, "novelty of technique and radiance of form do not begin to compensate for unholy material."

"Burning of the Big Roosevelt Building"⁷⁹

Although the Roosevelt Building's early history was associated with several innovations in fire prevention, including its much advertised "fireproof" construction and the extravagant exhibitions for the American Ball Nozzle Company's products, it suffered a disastrous fire in February 1903 that killed at least one fireman and injured numerous others. The press devoted a great deal of attention to the event, chronicling the fire's progress with both wonder and shock.

The conflagration started on the building's sixth floor, where the Altman Neckwear Company had their operations. At 4:00 a.m. the automatic alarm was triggered and flames proceeded to engulf the building's top three stories, moving quickly as a result of the highly combustible materials (fabrics, garments, etc.) contained within the building. At 5:00 a.m., "large cracks began to show in the stone front of the building"⁸⁰ and at 5:25 a.m., the roof of the building collapsed.⁸¹ Iron girders and columns, which were not encased in masonry, buckled under the collapsed roof and crashed through the interior marble stairwell landing, creating a hole through the building four stories deep.⁸² In addition, a large part

of the intermediate cornice below the seventh story fell off the building.⁸³ The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* dramatized the scene for its readers, stating “flames were belching forth from every window a distance of forty feet...and a tongue of flame of huge proportions leaped through the roof to a great height in the air, presenting a thrilling spectacle.”⁸⁴

Newspapers recounted the “thrilling escape” of Thomas Murphy, the building’s chief engineer, along with his wife, four children, and servant, whose “apartments were in a building on the roof,” presumably not far from Biograph’s studio.⁸⁵ Happily, all members of the group managed to escape safely.

The unfortunate irony of this fire was not lost on the *Real Estate Record and Builders Guide*, which remarked:

The destruction of the Roosevelt Building at the corner of 13th street and Broadway is not likely to increase the confidence of the public in ‘fireproof’ structures. Indeed, no one ought to wonder at the statement made recently that ‘nothing burns so readily as a fireproof building.’⁸⁶

The publication faulted the Roosevelts as well as Stephen D. Hatch, for the conflagration, dismissing the architect as “not a builder in the real sense of the word, but a maker of pictures, a scenic artist.”⁸⁷ While the author conceded that Hatch used “fireproof [floor] arches,” they rebuked him for leaving the metal unprotected without fireproof masonry and instead having “busied himself plastering the exterior of his building with a vast amount of not over-admirable ornamentation.”⁸⁸

The fire caused approximately \$250,000 worth of damage and the temporary unemployment

of 1,000 men and women who worked within the building.⁸⁹ Captain John T. Andariese of Engine Company No. 1 died while fighting the fire, tragically falling to his death through the massive hole that had been created as a result of the collapsed roof. Depending on the account, a dozen or so other firefighters were injured, in some cases quite severely.⁹⁰ Despite the damage to the Roosevelt Building, John E. Roosevelt, representing the Broadway Improvement Company, promised that the “structure would be reconstructed at once.”⁹¹

The 1903 fire made the Roosevelt Building front page news, but also highlighted prevailing construction challenges of the time. Fires were not uncommon in urban centers during the 19th and early-20th centuries and were a collective source of fear for builders, building owners, and residents alike. The construction of the Roosevelt Building was made possible by new technology such as metal framing, but this innovation was also accompanied by uncertainty and in some cases, misinformation. Buildings with metal frames purported to be fireproof at construction were often proved tragically otherwise. *The Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* warned readers after the 1903 fire at the Roosevelt Building, “There are literally hundreds of buildings now standing in this city, also called ‘fireproof’ –not one of which really is fireproof.”⁹² Properties of certain materials (such as iron breaking under extreme heat) were revealed over time, and lessons-learned from events such as the 1903 fire, culminated in a series of new laws and building codes in New York City (and across the country). Laws established after construction of the Roosevelt Building required that metal members be encased in a protective material, such as masonry, terra-cotta, or later, concrete.⁹³ *The Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* identified this as the primary cause for the fire in 1903, noting that the iron was “unprotected,” while conceding, “It is quite true the

[Roosevelt] building was erected before the present building laws.”⁹⁴

Unfortunately, the Roosevelt Building’s problematic history with fire was not solved after the 1903 disaster. In 1912, another fire started in the building, this time on the fifth story, occupied at the time by Hackett, Carhart & Co. Although the fire was “quickly extinguished...[and] confined to the fifth floor,” approximately \$25,000 worth of damage was inflicted.⁹⁵

The Roosevelt Building’s Later History

During the early- to mid-20th century, commercial tenants continued to occupy the Roosevelt Building, after Hackett, Carhart & Co. sold their retail interests in 1910 and filed for bankruptcy in 1912.⁹⁶ The Eron Preparatory School moved into the building’s fourth story in 1939.⁹⁷ Ohrbach’s, a local department store with their flagship on Union Square, became the building’s primary tenant in January 1937 and undertook major renovations on the building at a cost of \$150,000. They remained tenants for at least two decades.⁹⁸

The area south of Union Square and its surroundings experienced a decline during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s and, as architectural historian Christopher Gray pointed out, the “later restoration fever that swept over SoHo and adjacent areas missed the Roosevelt Building, which sat dirty with a bare scar where it copper cornice once ran.”⁹⁹

After the Domestic Sewing Machine Co. Building was demolished just north of The Roosevelt Building, a new office building was constructed in 1927 by the Broadway Improvement Company, with William Emlen Roosevelt serving as president. The Broadway and Fourteenth Development Corporation was also listed as an owner. Designed by architect Emery Roth, the building included 20 stories containing stores, offices, and lofts.¹⁰⁰ According to the New York City Department of Finance, Office of

the City Register, the two lots that originally encompassed the Roosevelts’ property along Broadway between 14th and 13th streets (Lots 15 and 17, containing the Emery Roth office building and the Roosevelt Building) were merged circa 1968 as Lot 15.¹⁰¹

In 2007, Israel Berger Architects began work on a major restoration project at the Roosevelt Building that included replacing the missing copper cornice, cleaning masonry, and replicating damaged terra-cotta detailing. Currently, the building is home to several commercial businesses, including: a Santander bank branch, a Maison Kayser restaurant franchise, Jivamukti Yoga Center New York, and Max Brenner Chocolate Bar. The prominent corner building was praised in the American Institute of Architects *Guide to New York City* as “a majestic expression of Romanesque Revival” noting particularly that “Berger has enticed a lovely copper cornice to make a resilient comeback.”¹⁰²

Conclusion

The Roosevelt Building, located at 841 Broadway just south of Union Square, is an architecturally significant example of a transitional Romanesque Revival/Renaissance Revival style commercial building and “one of the earliest skyscrapers in the city.”¹⁰³ Associated with the development history of Broadway during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the elegant corner building was a forerunning in a period of transition when earlier low-scale residential buildings were replaced by taller store and loft buildings. The construction of these early skyscrapers was made possible by rapid advances in technology, including iron- and steel-frame construction, electricity, and elevators. Home to a number of clothing factories, storerooms, and showrooms during its early history, the Roosevelt Building is historically associated with the garment industry in New York City, which was concentrated

in the area south of Union Square during the late-20th century.

In addition, the Roosevelt Building has a unique historical significance as the location of the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company's (Biograph's) first studio. One of the earliest and most recognizable film companies, Biograph's founders invented new technology – namely the Mutoscope viewing machine and Biograph projector – that transformed the film industry around the turn of the century. Ultimately, the directors, cameramen, and screen stars hired by Biograph, would become defining figures in film history.

The Roosevelt Building remains an exquisitely intact example of the high-rise commercial development that occurred south of Union Square during the late-19th century and an exceptional reminder of America's budding motion picture industry.

Endnote

¹ At the public hearing on December 4, 2018, the representative of GVSHP provided testimony but did not specifically support or oppose the proposed designation according to the sign-in sheet. An email received on June 7, 2019 clarified that the testimony from GVSHP on December 4 was in support of the proposed designation.

² Maureen Stafford and Dora Ware, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Ornament* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), 142.

³ This section is compiled from information in the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *827-831 Broadway Buildings Designation Report (LP-2594)* (New York: City of New York, 2017), prepared by Sarah Moses, 7-8; LPC, *NoHo Historic District Designation Report (LP-2039)* (New York: City of New York, 1999), prepared by Donald Presa, 9-10, 16.

⁴ Theodore Roosevelt was president from 1901-1908; Franklin Delano Roosevelt was president from 1933-1945.

⁵ "A New Store and Office Building," *New-York Daily Tribune*, February 1893, 4; "New Building for Broadway: The Roosevelts to Put Up a Structure at Thirteenth Street," *The New York Times*, January 26, 1893, 9.

⁶ "The Brownstone Townhouse of Theodore Roosevelt," Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace, National Historic Site New York, National Park Service, 2015, accessed October 15, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/thrb/learn/historyculture/brownstone.htm>.

⁷ Stefan Lorant, "The Boy in the Window," *American Heritage*, Volume 6, Issue 4 (1955) accessed October 15, 2018, <https://www.americanheritage.com/content/boy-window>.

⁸ "Obituary: Cornelius V.S. Roosevelt," *The New York Times*, July 18, 1871, 1.

⁹ "New Building for Broadway: The Roosevelts to Put Up a Structure at Thirteenth Street," 9.

¹⁰ This property was located on the northern half of what is currently referred to as Lot 15. The Roosevelt Building is located on the southern half of Lot 15, which was formerly referred to as Lot 17.

¹¹ Tom Miller, "The Lost Domestic Sewing Machine Bldg – Broadway and 14th Street," *Daytonian in Manhattan*, November 14, 2016, accessed October 15, 2018, <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/2016/11/the-lost-domestic-sewing-machine-bldg.html>.

¹² Bromley Map, 1891, Plate 11, New York Public Library.

¹³ "New Building for Broadway: The Roosevelts to Put Up a Structure at Thirteenth Street," 9.

¹⁴ This section on architect Stephen D. Hatch is adapted from LPC *Gilsey House Designation Report (LP-1039)* (New York: City of New York, 1979), 2; LPC *Robbins and Appleton Building (LP-1038)* (New York: City of New York, 1979), 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ "A New Store and Office Building," 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ "New Building for Broadway: The Roosevelts to Put Up a Structure at Thirteenth Street," 9; "Fire Captain Falls to Death: Iron Columns of a Burning Building Gave Way," *The Sun*, February 27, 1903, 14; "Combustible 'Fireproof' Buildings Again," *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide*, Vol. LXXI, No 1825, March 7, 1903, 425.

²⁰ Friedman, 66.

²¹ *Real Estate Record and Builders Guide*, May 6, 1893, 699.

²² Landau and Condit, 97.

²³ This became a particular point of discussion in 1896 when the topic of building a subway below Broadway was hotly debated and heard by the Supreme Court Special Commission on Rapid Transit. The Roosevelts and builder Eidlitz were against construction for fear of the impact it would have on the Roosevelt Building. "Rapid Transit Hearing: Testimony from Mr. Eidlitz on the Matter of Interference with Foundations," *The Evening Post: New York*, January 18, 1896, 7.

²⁴ David Von Drehle, *Triangle: The Fire that Changed America*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁷ Mike Wallace, *Greater Gotham: A History of New York City from 1898 to 1919* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 319.

²⁸ Von Drehle, 46-47.

²⁹ Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in their Cultural and Technological Context*, (London: University Press of England, 1999), 154-57.

- ³⁰ Ibid., 154-55.
- ³¹ Donald Friedman, *Structure in Skyscrapers: History and Preservation* (Donald Friedman, 2014), 29.
- ³² Gelernter, 154-55.
- ³³ Friedman, 29.
- ³⁴ Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 173.
- ³⁵ Friedman, 63-64.
- ³⁶ Friedman, 11.
- ³⁷ Gelernter, 156.
- ³⁸ Sarah Bradford Landau and Carl W. Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 183.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 156-57.
- ⁴⁰ LPC *NoHo Historic District Designation Report (LP-2039)*, 16.
- ⁴¹ Wallace, 319-20.
- ⁴² Von Drehle, 47.
- ⁴³ LPC *NoHo Historic District Designation Report (LP-2039)*, 16.
- ⁴⁴ *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide*, December 22, 1894, 921.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ "A Novel Fire Nozzle – Its Main Feature is a Paradox to Hydraulic Engineers," *The Sun*, March 3, 1895, 4.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ "The Porter Air Lighter Company," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1897, 10.
- ⁵⁰ "One Dead, Many Injured in Big Manhattan Fire," *The Standard Union*, Brooklyn, Vol. XXXIX, No. 237, February 26, 1903, 1; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1904, Volume 3, Sheet 25.
- ⁵¹ William Cauldwell, ed., *Successful American*, Volume 7, Part 1 – Volume 8, Part 1 (New York City: Park Row Building, Writers' Press Association, 1902), 485-86.
- ⁵² "New Clothing for the Men," *The Evening Telegram – New York*, May 13, 1896, 7; "Clothing," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 14, 1886, 1.
- ⁵³ The year 1906 is commonly given as the year Biograph moved to their new location (Wallace, 415). However, based on a review of Biograph films that are available online through the Library of Congress and film historian Paul C. Spehr, it is likely that the company moved as early as 1903. This may have been as a result of the fire that occurred at the building in 1903, during which the roof fell in and likely caused severe damage to the studio. Paul C. Spehr, "Filmmaking at the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company 1900-1906," *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, Vol. 37, No. 3/4 (Summer/Fall) (1980), 416, accessed October 2, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29781869>.
- ⁵⁴ Tim Dirks, "The History of Film, The Pre-1920s: Early Cinematic Origins and the Infancy of Film Part 1," AMC Filmsite, accessed October 23, 2018, <http://www.filmsite.org/pre20sintro.html>.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Ryan Lintelman, "Mining the Movie Museum: The Mutoscope Collection at the National Museum of American History," College of William and Mary, Undergraduate Honors Theses, Paper 267, 2009, 40.
- ⁵⁸ Dirks.
- ⁵⁹ Lintelman, 40.
- ⁶⁰ Lintelman, 41.
- ⁶¹ "History of the Mutoscope," The Museum of Modern Art, Press Preview for Release (New York City: Museum of Modern Art, August 2, 1967).
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Lintelman, 41.
- ⁶⁴ Numerous short films made on the roof of 841 Broadway, or adjacent to it, are available online through the Library of Congress. Several films show parts of The Roosevelt Building including: "Star Theater" (1901) and "The Skyscrapers of New York" (1906).
- ⁶⁵ Spehr, 413.
- ⁶⁶ "Alterations," *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide*, February 22, 1896, 317. The remains of the film studio are no longer extant on the roof of the Roosevelt Building.
- ⁶⁷ Wallace, 415.
- ⁶⁸ "History of the Mutoscope," The Museum of Modern Art.
- ⁶⁹ Lintelman, 42.

⁷⁰ “History of the Mutoscope,” *The Museum of Modern Art*.

⁷¹ The author of this thesis states: “The hundreds of films that the company made on the rooftop stage over their New York headquarters were seen by more people than any other early studio, and the business made the proprietors wealthy men. Mutoscope parlors began opening in American cities in 1896, and immediately began cutting into Edison’s Kinetoscope business.” Lintelman, 41-42; also see “Thomas A. Edison Papers,” *Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs: The Emergence of Biograph and its Rivalry with Edison*, Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences, 2016, accessed October 25, 2018, <http://edison.rutgers.edu/mopix/biograph.htm>.

⁷² Lintelman, 43.

⁷³ Ronald Magliozzi and Alice Black “Guide to the Biograph Collection: Museum of Modern Art, Department of Film, The Celeste Bartos International Film Study Center,” (New York City: Museum of Modern Art, 1999).

⁷⁴ Spehr, 413.

⁷⁵ Wallace, 415; Richard Alleman, “New York: The Movie Lover’s Guide: The Ultimate Insider Tour of Movie New York,” (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 2005), 210-12.

⁷⁶ Wallace, 415.

⁷⁷ Brett Wood, “D.W. Griffith with Biograph,” *Turner Classic Movies Film Article*. 2018, accessed October 26, 2018, <http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/345137%7C0/D-W-Griffith-with-Biograph.html>.

⁷⁸ Tim Dirks, “The History of Film, The Pre-1920s: Early Cinematic Origins and the Infancy of Film Part 3,” *AMC Filmsite*, accessed October 26, 2018, <http://www.filmsite.org/pre20sintro3.html>.

⁷⁹ This was the headline accompanying a photograph of the Roosevelt Building engulfed in flames on the front page of the *The World Evening Edition*, February 26, 1903, 1.

⁸⁰ “Fire Captain Loses His Life,” *The New York Press*, February 27, 1903, 8.

⁸¹ “Killed in Broadway Fire,” *The Evening Post: New York*, February 26, 1903, 2.

⁸² “Fire Captain Falls to Death: Iron Columns of a Burning Building Gave Way,” 14.

⁸³ “\$250,000 Fire in Broadway; One Man Killed, Many

Hurt,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Vol. 63, No 56, February 26, 1903, 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Flames and smoke rising from the building’s top floor limited the family’s available escape routes, forcing them to flee via the roof of the neighboring building after apparently fashioning a makeshift ladder from bed sheets. “Fire Hero Killed; Fire Loss \$250,000,” *The Evening Telegram*, February 26, 1903, 14.

⁸⁶ “Combustible ‘Fireproof’ Buildings Again,” 425.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ “Fire Captain Falls to Death: Iron Columns of a Burning Building Gave Way,” 14.

⁹⁰ “Last Alarm for Brave Fireman: Capt. Andariese of the New York Department Loses His Life at Big Blaze Which He was Just Quitting,” *The Buffalo Courier*, February 27, 1903, 3.

⁹¹ *New York Herald*, February 27, 1903, “Fire Hero Dies in a \$250,000 Blaze, Broadway Firms Lose Heavily in Partial Destruction of the Roosevelt Building,” Friday, Page 5.

⁹² “Combustible ‘Fireproof’ Buildings Again,” 425.

⁹³ Landau and Condit, 183.

⁹⁴ “Combustible ‘Fireproof’ Buildings Again,” 425.

⁹⁵ “Fire Blocks Broadway: \$25,000 Blaze on Fifth Floor of the Roosevelt Building,” *New York Herald*, February 13, 1912, 13.

⁹⁶ “From Sweeper to Owner,” *New-York Tribune*, December 31, 1910, 14. E. E. Turlington purchased Hackett, Carhart & Co.’s retail stock and business in 1910, although the purchase did not go into effect until 1911. The retail component became Hackett, Carhart & Co., Inc., Retail, which went out of business within approximately a year; Tom Miller, “The 1893 Roosevelt Building – 839-841 Broadway,” *Daytonian in Manhattan*, December 1, 2010, accessed October 29, 2018, <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/2010/12/893-roosevelt-building-839-841-broadway.html>.

⁹⁷ “Eron School Moves to Larger Quarters,” *The New York Sun*, September 14, 1939, 34.

⁹⁸ Miller, “The 1893 Roosevelt Building – 839-841 Broadway.”

⁹⁹ Christopher Gray, “A Family’s Legacy, Burnished

Anew,” *The New York Times*, April 13, 2008, RE7.

¹⁰⁰ New Building 561-27

¹⁰¹ A deed from 1967 identifies the property as two separate lots (Lots 15 and 17); a deed from 1968, however, identifies the property as including only one lot, Lot 15.

¹⁰² Norval White and Elliot Willensky with Fran Leadon, *AIA Guide to New York City*, Fifth Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 162.

¹⁰³ “Overcome by back Draught: Falling Coping, Too, Injures Fireman at Union Square Blaze,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 1905, 16.

Findings and Designation

The Roosevelt Building

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

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 Roosevelt Building and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 565, Lot 15 in part, consisting of the land beneath the building's footprint, as shown on the attached map



**Detail of Broadway Facade,
The Roosevelt Building**
Jessica Baldwin, August, 2018



Corner Detail, The Roosevelt Building
Jessica Baldwin, August, 2018



The Roosevelt Building, 841 Broadway

New York City Department of Taxes Photograph (c. 1938-1943), Courtesy NYC Municipal Archives



Cupola, The Roosevelt Building
Jessica Baldwin, August, 2018



The Roosevelt Building
Sarah Moses, June, 2019



**13th Street Facade,
The Roosevelt Building**
Sarah Moses, June, 2019

