

**MILLS HOTEL NO. 3**, 485 Seventh Avenue (aka 481-489 Seventh Avenue, 155-163 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street), Manhattan

Built: 1906-07; architect, Copeland & Dole

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 812, Lot 1

On October 26, 2010, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Mills Hotel No. 3 and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. A total of three witnesses, including representatives of Assembly Member Richard N Gottfried, the Historic Districts Council, and the Victorian Society – New York spoke in favor of the designation. A representative of the owner testified in opposition to the designation. On October 14, 2010, the Full Board of Manhattan Community Board 5 adopted a resolution in support of the designation. On October 28, 2014 the Commission received a letter from Scott J. Avram, Senior Vice President of 485 Seventh Avenue Associates LLC, the contract vendee of the Mills Hotel Building, indicating its strong support for the designation.

Summary

Described by the *New York Times* as the “world’s biggest hotel” and the “finest for the use of men of limited means,” this handsome 16-story neo-Renaissance building, erected in 1906-07, was the third and largest of the three model residential hotels for single working men erected by Darius Ogden Mills at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building was noted in journals of the day for its restrained design that conveys the dignity of its mission, and its architectural expression was described as “a pride to the city.” Mills was a banker and philanthropist particularly concerned with the problems of housing the urban poor. In 1896 he commissioned Ernest Flagg, a young architect who had revolutionized thinking about low-cost urban housing with his proposal for a new building type based on a 100 foot-wide module incorporating a central light court, to build the ten-story 1,554-room Mills House No. 1 at 160 Bleecker Street (1896-97, included within the South Village Historic District) and nine-story, 600-room Mills House No. 2 at Chrystie and Rivington Streets (1896-98, demolished). In 1905, spurred by the success of his two earlier hotels and wanting a hotel in a thriving Midtown location convenient to public transportation, Mills commissioned Copeland & Dole (Harry Lewis Copeland, William Herbert Dole), an architectural firm established by two of Flagg’s former employees, to design this hotel.



Rising to 16 stories, Mills Hotel No. 3 originally had 1,885 small single bedrooms each with a window opening onto the street or courtyard. The building incorporates two light-court units linked by central elevator hall. The unprecedented scale of the project together with the “utmost economies in administration” allowed Mills to significantly lower costs per room and offer the men residing in the hotel “a larger equivalent for their money” than heretofore possible. Conveying “a simple but dignified appearance,” the building’s facades are clad with limestone, light-colored brick, and terra cotta. The end bays are slightly projected and the windows are grouped in rhythmic patterns to provide visual interest. The stories are arranged into a three-story rusticated limestone base (the first and second story have been extensively altered), nine-story brick-clad mid-section, and four-story terra-cotta-clad attic. Molded string courses and cornices, fielded panels, cartouches,

lion heads, and a richly embellished Renaissance copper cornice also contribute to the design.

After Mills's death in 1910, a family trust continued to operate the hotel as a low-cost residence for single men. The majority of guests were blue collar workers, salesmen, and hotel and service industry employees but the hotel's location near the theater district made it particularly popular with actors and entertainers, especially in the 1910s. In 1940 Mayor La Guardia took part in a ceremony at this hotel welcoming the 50,000,000<sup>th</sup> guest to the Mills Hotel chain. The Mills family retained ownership of this hotel until 1954. The building remained a low cost hotel until the early 1980s, although stores and a parking lot were installed in its lower stories. In the 1980s it became the Fashion Avenue Atrium and was remodeled for use as offices and show rooms. Aside from the alterations to its lower stories, its facades remain largely intact and the building retains its historical and architectural significance as a reminder of the Housing Reform Movement and the Progressive Era.

## **BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

Mills Hotel No. 3 is a 16-story neo-Renaissance building located at the northeastern corner of Seventh Avenue and West 36<sup>th</sup> Street. It extends for about 96 feet along Seventh Avenue and about 174 feet along West 36<sup>th</sup> Street. In plan the building is mainly comprised of two wings each with a central light court, linked by a center tower fronted by a two-story vestibule. To the rear of the center tower is a square wing, which originally housed showers and lavatories. Narrow alleys run along the north and east sides of the building. The eastern facade is partially visible from 36<sup>th</sup> Street; the northern facade is largely screened from view by surrounding buildings. Both of these facades were originally surrounded by low-rise buildings and were articulated to match the design of the street facades.

The building originally had a 2<sup>1/2</sup>-story base with a high basement. In the 1950s the first story was lowered to ground level, a second story was created, and the main entrance was shifted to 485 Seventh Avenue. The original second story became the third story. Masonry elements were removed to create storefronts on the Seventh Avenue facade and at the base of the west wing on 36<sup>th</sup> Street; a parking garage was installed at the base of the east wing. The lower two stories have been re-clad, but the third story retains its original limestone cladding. Above the base, the building's nine-story mid-section is clad in cream-colored brick accented with stone trim. The four-story attic is faced with terra cotta and is embellished with molded string courses and cornices. Fielded panels, cartouches, lions' heads, and a copper cornice also contribute to the design.

On Seventh Avenue, the building entry and storefronts are non-historic; on West 36<sup>th</sup> Street the two story-entrance wing retains its original massing. It still retains its original decorative frieze, but its original metal-and-glass facade has been replaced with contemporary infill. Above the entrance wing the building sets back to form a deep light court. The rear wall of the light court (the south wall of the elevator tower) is pierced by two tall multi-story window openings which retain their original metal-and-glass infill and window sash. Aside from the one-over-one windows in these openings, the original one-over-one windows above the second story on all four facades appear to have been replaced. Many of the windows appear to retain their historic brick moldings. Both facades appear to have been painted.

In the 1980s the center light courts in each wing were reconfigured, reduced in size, and converted to atriums. The original courtyard walls were razed and replaced with modern wall and window systems; the original skylights over the main floor courtyard sitting rooms were also removed and large pyramidal skylights were installed on the roof above the new atriums.

**Seventh Avenue (west) facade:**

*Historic:* The third story of base remains largely intact. The major portion of the base faced with banded stone rustication, lit by square-headed windows. Third story capped by simple stone drip course. The mid-section is faced with light-colored brick; flat-arched window openings. Continuous stone sill course beneath the fourth-story windows; individual windows have projecting stone sills, fifth to 11th stories. Simple stone cornices set off the 12th-story windows. The symmetry of the façade is off-set by the presence of a chimney on the north façade which is set back slightly from the west façade and clad in a simplified version of the same façade materials. Crown: Thirteenth to 16<sup>th</sup> stories faced with terra cotta. Recessed spandrel panels beneath the windows ornamented with raised crosses at the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> stories. Principle piers at the 16th story decorated with cartouches and lions' heads. Decorative copper cornice supported by console brackets above terra-cotta egg and dart molding. Cornice punctuated above the piers by simple disks.

*Alterations:* Base was reconfigured with new storefront openings at grade and a new second story in 1950s; first and second story re-clad; non-historic central entry and storefronts. Base of chimney is painted. Horizontal metal poles for banners above the second and fourth story windows. Terra-cotta joints patched; resurfaced above the cartouches and at the impost of the windows at the south end of the façade.

**West 36<sup>th</sup> Street (south) facade**

*Historic:* Two 16-story blocks flanking a central two-story metal-and-glass-fronted entrance wing and light court. The façade continues the pattern, materials, and detailing established on the Seventh Avenue façade, except for the articulation of the south façade of the light court and two-story entrance wing. Windows on the rear wall of the court are grouped into a large segmental arched opening extending from the third to 11th stories and a rectangular opening extending from the 13th to 15th stories. Metal framework in large openings articulated with pilasters and cornices and decorative spandrel panels; windows arranged in a five bay composition with alternating wide and narrow bays. Twelfth and 16th stories each lit by three windows.

Base: masonry piers flanking the entrance bay articulated as pilasters remain in part; retain their stylized tablet capitals with raised "M"s for Mills. Entrance wing façade still retains its original attic frieze ornamented with recessed panels, guttae, and lions' heads.

*Alterations:* Base altered at first and second stories. West wing: window inserted at west end, non-historic masonry infill, metal door, and louvered vent at first story; dark glass ribbon window at second story. Non-historic cladding covers the stonework. Historic light fixture, originally on pier flanking entry, removed; non-historic light fixtures added at second story. Entry wing: first and second-story door and window framing elements entirely removed; non-historic storefronts and windows. Non-historic awning and second-story banner for western store. Original metal-and-glass canopy removed. Top of cornice replaced. Metal railing extends along edge of roofline. Light Court: electrical junction box and conduits at the third story on the west wall of the light court wall. East wing: pier to east of entry reduced in width and historic light fixture removed. Non-historic

parking garage infill installed at first and second story. Non-historic projecting street light attached to stone cornice above second story to light garage entrance.

Upper stories: vertical neon “Park” sign with metal framing. Patching on window sills at the fifth and sixth stories of bay 11 (reading west to east) on the western wing. Non-historic light fixtures above the fifth-story windows on the side walls of the light court. Patching on the wall and window sills on the center seventh windows of the eastern wing.

### **East façade**

*Historic:* Repeats materials and articulation of street facades except for the substitution of gray-brick cladding on all but three end bays of the mid-section of facade. As on the Seventh Avenue façade, simplified moldings are employed to articulate the two chimneys. Because neighboring buildings block the view only portions of the façade, mainly the upper stories, are visible from street level.

### **North facade**

*Historic:* The original design of the street facades is repeated for at least a portion of the facade.

*Alterations:* The construction of the adjacent building to the north largely obscures the view of the north façade.

### **Roof**

*Historic:* Two-story setback penthouse that housed utilitarian support spaces, elevators and mechanical equipment.

*Alterations:* The penthouse has been extensively altered and re-clad. Large skylight enclosures over the atriums; HVAC equipment on south side east wing; vent pipe and mechanical equipment from 499 Seventh Avenue to the chimney at the northwest corner of the roof.

## **SITE HISTORY**

### Lodging Houses in New York City<sup>1</sup>

By the 1890s, immigration and industrialization were bringing unprecedented numbers of people to American cities. As a result, Cleveland, Buffalo, Washington, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and every other major city were experiencing problems with housing. In New York City, where immigration was most intense, more than two-thirds of the 3,500,000 inhabitants lived in 90,000 tenement buildings. In addition there were an army of unskilled and unemployed workers, mostly young unmarried men, many transients, who could not afford their own apartments or even a room in a rooming house and who ended up living in cheap lodging houses. In *How the Other Half Lives*, Jacob Riis wrote that this nightly population was “as large as that of many a thriving town.”<sup>2</sup>

Almost all of the 100-plus lodging houses operating in the city in 1905 were privately-owned commercial ventures offering accommodations on a daily or, less commonly, a weekly basis. Most were 25-to-50-feet-wide, five-story, mid-block buildings, occupying almost the entire depth of their lots, with a store or, more likely, a saloon at ground level (the bartender also served as the desk clerk). The most costly lodging houses offered small private rooms with shared toilets and sinks and usually one bathroom for every 10 to 20 rooms. More common were the cubicle- or cell-style lodging houses where the upper floors of the building were divided by seven-foot-high wood or corrugated-iron partitions into cells measuring about 5 x 7 feet that were arranged in rows from front to back. Open dormitory ward-type lodging houses were a less costly alternative, with

homemade bunk beds or cots crowded into open lofts. Finally, at the lowest rung of the lodging house spectrum were “flophouses,” open lofts offering at best a pile of mattresses or hammocks but more commonly bare floors where lodgers could unfurl their bedrolls or newspapers.

In addition to the lack of privacy, lodging houses were often beset by a host of problems. Most had only one internal staircase, though they housed hundreds of occupants in their upper stories. Most were poorly heated and some lacked any heat at all. In cubicle lodging houses ventilation was a major problem since the occupants with the cells adjacent to the windows controlled the ventilation for the floor. In winter the windows remained firmly shut; in summer they were woefully inadequate. Lighting was also often a problem since it was limited to ceiling gaslight fixtures. Vermin, filth, lice, bedbugs, and foul smells were endemic to lodging houses. Moreover, as historian Paul Groth has observed, “in some cubicle hotels, as few as two toilets served 180 occupants.”<sup>3</sup>

Bathtubs or showers may have been absent altogether. Residents might find one common drinking cup per floor and common towels that one critic compared to “those in a fourth-class printing office.” Managers kept staff to a minimum; therefore, the beds, walls, and floors stayed unclean.<sup>4</sup>

Such conditions brought cheap lodging houses to the attention of city officials and reformers who were motivated both by fear of disease and fire and by humanitarian concerns. A number of attempts were made to ameliorate these conditions. In 1886 the New York State Legislature authorized the creation of a Municipal Lodging House, although it was not until March 1896, at the height of the depression following the Financial Panic of 1893, that an old barge was fitted up with beds to house the destitute. Several charitable organizations also offered lodgings, including the Bowery Mission, which went from offering a few beds in 1886 to providing 125 beds, primarily in dormitories, in 1892. While most of these ventures were aimed at providing for the neediest cases, Darius O. Mills decided to create inexpensive cubicle-style lodgings for the working poor that would compete with and raise the level of the city’s commercial lodging houses.

#### Darius O. Mills and the Mills Hotels

Darius Ogden Mills (1825-1910) was born in Westchester County.<sup>5</sup> After working in a bank in Buffalo, he went to California in 1849 where he opened a trading company in Stockton, later moving to Sacramento. In 1850 he established the D.O. Mills & Co. Bank in Sacramento, which became the leading bank in the city. Mills retired from banking in 1878 and in 1880 moved his primary residence to New York City, although he retained his house in Millbrae, San Mateo County, California. Mills became an investor in banking, mining, railways, industrial concerns, and real estate. By the time of his death he had amassed a fortune of about \$40,000,000.

Mills began his philanthropic career in California where he was an organizer and benefactor of the San Francisco Protestant Orphan Asylum and St. Luke’s Hospital.<sup>6</sup> In addition to building the Mills Hotels, Darius Ogden Mills also was a major shareholder in the Improved Dwellings Association, which built a model tenement at First Avenue and East 71<sup>st</sup> Street; was a founder of the City & Suburban Homes Company, the most successful of the limited-dividend companies building model housing at the turn of the twentieth century; and was the principal backer of Ernest Flagg’s New York Fireproof Tenement Association (later the Model Fireproof Tenement Company), which erected the first fireproof model tenements in New York at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue in 1899-1901.

Mills’ interest in the lodging house problem seems to have stemmed from a business association with Montagu William Lowry-Corry, Lord Rowton (1838-1903), who served with Mills on the Board of Directors of the London Railway.<sup>7</sup> Lord Rowton was a Conservative party

politician, who had been Benjamin Disraeli's private secretary.<sup>8</sup> In 1890, while involved with a trust that provided low-cost housing to workers, Lord Rowton made a survey of low-cost accommodations in London's East End. As a result of his study, Lord Rowton decided that there was a need for a new type of hostel for transient working men that would give them a better, cleaner, place to live. Purely as a matter of charity he erected a 470-bed cubicle lodging house on Bond Street in Vauxhall (opened 1892), which proved to be such a desirable and well-managed enterprise that it actually succeeded in earning a small profit. In 1894, a company was formed under the name of Rowton Houses, Ltd. to build additional lodging houses. The company erected five more hotels by 1905.

Inspired by Lord Rowton's success, Mills "determined to give his own city the best system of lodging houses for men in the world."<sup>9</sup> Like Lord Rowton he aimed to help "self-respecting men who earned only small salaries or were hunting for work" and to provide them with "cleanliness, comfort, and convenience."<sup>10</sup> Like the Rowton Houses, the Mills Hotels were intended to make a small profit, to remove any hint that the lodgers were receiving a handout.

In March 1896, at a conference on housing conditions in New York City, it was announced that Mills had engaged Ernest Flagg to design two mammoth model lodging houses, Mills House No. 1 in Greenwich Village at Bleecker and Thompson Streets, and Mills House No. 2 on the Lower East Side at Chrystie and Rivington Streets, to provide accommodations for a total of 2,250 lodgers. Flagg, who had been in practice for about five years, had already received important commissions to design the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington and St. Luke's Hospital in New York. He was among the first Beaux-Arts-trained architects to specialize in low cost housing and had revolutionized thinking about tenement planning in a 1894 *Scribner's* magazine article in which he analyzed the problems inherent in the then standard dumbbell plan for tenements and proposed a new building type based on a 100 foot-wide module incorporating a central light court. For the Mills Hotel No. 1, the larger and more complex of the two buildings, Flagg employed two ten-story 100 foot-wide center light court blocks joined together by a center stair hall.<sup>11</sup> On the upper stories 1,554 cubicle rooms were ranged around double-loaded corridors so that each cubicle had a window facing onto the street or courtyard. The basement, first story and part of the second story were used for used for baths, laundries, lavatories, kitchens, a restaurant, and lounges including the glazed over court yards. The two original Mills Hotels, a model tenement, which Flagg erected for Mills at 183-185 Sullivan Street in 1896-98, and Flagg's no-longer extant Alfred Corning Clark Buildings were the first buildings in the country to realize the ideas Flagg had proposed in his *Scribner's* article; they served as prototypes for future model tenements and ultimately for the provisions of the Tenement House Law of 1901 (the so-called "New Law").

#### "A Pride to the City"

By 1905, the first Mills Hotel was turning away 300 to 400 men a night due to the lack of rooms. Darius O. Mills decided to erect Mills Hotel No. 3, this time opting for a site at Seventh Avenue and West 36<sup>th</sup> Street, in proximity to the thriving commercial and theater district along Broadway, which included the new Macy's Department Store at Herald Square (De Lemos & Cordes, 1901), and the still unfinished Pennsylvania Station at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Seventh Avenue (McKim & Mead & White, 1904-10, demolished). As J. L. Thomas, the manager of the Mills Hotels, explained in a newspaper interview, the site had been selected because it fulfilled the philanthropic mission of the organization:

Undoubtedly the section of the city where the new Mills Hotel will be built is destined to become a centre for business houses, and for that very reason it will be the most favorable locality for our patrons. The latter, as a rule, are men of straitened circumstances, who are looking for work and to whom the spending of a

nickel in carfare in going to seek it is an important consideration. This will be provided for by placing the new hotel in the vicinity where work can be most easily found.<sup>12</sup>

Because the site was so expensive, costing \$500,000 for a lot with a frontage of 175 feet on West 36<sup>th</sup> Street and 98 feet on Seventh Avenue, Mills elected to erect a 15-story plus basement building with 1,875 rooms, making it according to the *New York Times* “the world’s largest hotel,” – “not the hotel that covers the largest area of ground or boasts the maximum of stories – but the hotel that nightly houses the greatest number of human beings”<sup>13</sup> The commission for the hotel was awarded to the firm of Copeland and Dole, headed by Harry Lewis Copeland and [William] Herbert Dole, both former employees of Ernest Flagg, who had probably worked on the earlier Mills Hotels while they were in Flagg’s office.

Copeland & Dole’s plan for Mills Hotel No. 3 echoed that of Mills House No. 1 in its incorporation of two light-court blocks linked by a center tower fronted by a vestibule, which provided access to a broad staircase leading up to the main floor with its reception area, elevator bank, and lounges, including the large skylighted sitting rooms, which were located at the base of the two central courtyards in each wing.<sup>14</sup> As at Mills House No. 1, there were “no dark rooms” since all rooms faced on to the street, one of the internal courtyards, or the courts between the center tower wing and the dormitory blocks. At Mills House No. 3, Copeland & Dole also added a wing behind the elevator tower to provide toilets and sinks on the upper floors, correcting a deficiency in the layout of Mills House No. 1, where there were no lavatories above the mezzanine level. Other improvements included the incorporation of somewhat larger, better lit bedrooms; electric lighting; and ice water, available throughout the building from the refrigeration plant in the basement of the hotel. According to the *New York Tribune* Mills Hotel No. 3’s basement and its fittings had received Mr. Mills’ special attention “and here many of the latest devices of modern hotel science have been installed.”<sup>15</sup> The basement was especially high to insure that it received plenty of light and air. It contained a restaurant seating 400, kitchens, a bakeshop, refrigeration plant, baggage room, staff dining room, washroom, showers, and a barber shop. On the first floor were the lounges, four sitting rooms, equipped with books, writing materials, and “various games for the amusement of the guests,” and the offices for the hotel; in the cellar were baggage storage, furnace and boiler, repair shop, and a cold storage room.

Reflecting the latest trends in architecture, Mills Hotel No. 3 was designed in the neo-Renaissance Style. It featured a tripartite story arrangement, with a two-story-plus-basement, now three-story, rusticated granite base (in 1956 the first story was lowered to ground level and the original first story became the building’s second story), a nine-story buff brick mid-section, and a four-story terra-cotta crown. The end bays were slightly projected and the windows were grouped in rhythmic patterns to provide visual interest. Molded string courses and cornices, fielded panels, cartouches, lions’ heads, and a richly embellished Renaissance copper cornice also contributed to the design.

Several journalists, writing about the Mills Hotel No. 3 soon after it opened, commented on the simplicity of its design, noting that the building presented “a simple but dignified appearance” and describing it as “simple in style, but handsome in appearance.” One critic, writing for the *Architects’ and Builders’ Magazine*, compared it to the recently opened Plaza Hotel (Henry J. Hardenbergh, 1905-07, a designated New York City Landmark), which was also reviewed in the same issue of the magazine, saying that “there are two kinds of simplicity and we seldom have them so well depicted as in the exterior design of the two great hotels which are illustrated in this issue.”<sup>16</sup>

The Plaza ... has simplicity of design, executed in rich materials, producing an effect which is hard to describe – refined, dignified and entrancing; if we may use the term. The Mills Hotel, number three, on the other hand, has the severe simplicity of utilitarian purpose. The exterior impresses one of strength and serviceable qualities. Its dignity is of a different character, and while less attractive to the eye, it none the less commands interest.<sup>17</sup>

Several factors undoubtedly contributed to the simplicity of the Mills Hotel design. Chief among these would have been cost constraints, since Mills placed such an importance on the hotel's being self-supporting. Moreover tastes were changing, away from the heavy Beaux Arts ornament Flagg had employed for Mills House No. 1 to the neo-Renaissance style, with its emphasis on simplicity of mass and detail. The comparison with Hardenbergh's Plaza Hotel is instructive. The exterior designs of both the Mills Hotel No. 3 and the Plaza employ tripartite story groupings, projected bays to frame the facades, and rhythmic arrangement of window bays. Critics in reviewing the Plaza Hotel were right in noting how much simpler and more restrained it was than Hardenbergh's Waldorf Astoria (1893, 1897, demolished), but the Plaza still retained an elaborate Chateausque roofline, corner towers, and comparatively heavy detailing. Copeland & Dole's Mills Hotel No. 3 on the other hand is more in the spirit of buildings such as Trowbridge & Livingston's B. Altman & Co. Department Store (1905-13, a designated New York City Landmark), McKim, Mead & White's Pierpont Morgan Library (1902-07, a designated New York City Landmark), or McKim, Mead & White's 998 Fifth Avenue (1910-12, a designated New York City Landmark) in its simple block-like form, Italian Renaissance detailing, and chaste, almost reticent, use of ornament. As the critic for the *Architects' and Builders' Magazine* observed, the building's design does project a sense of strength and dignity. Though restrained, the ornament at Mills Hotel No. 3 is quite handsome, particularly the lions' head cartouches and cornice. The rhythmic arrangement and spacing of the windows also is carefully studied. Finally, the architects' achievement in providing "plenty of comforts and even a luxury or two for 30 cents a day"<sup>18</sup> to almost 2,000 guests must be acknowledged. As the *Architects' and Builders' Magazine* noted – "When we look on the numerous windows, and consider that each one lights one room, we begin to realize the resources of the building."<sup>19</sup> For *The New York Observer & Chronicle*, "the outside of the building and appointments are a pride to the city."<sup>20</sup>

### Copeland & Dole

It seems probable that Harry Lewis Copeland (1869-?) and William Herbert Dole (1869-1953) met while they were working in the office of Ernest Flagg. H.L. Copeland was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Brooklyn where his father was a policeman.<sup>21</sup> In 1887 Harry L. Copeland was listed in the Brooklyn directories as a carpenter, in 1888 he was listed as a builder, and from 1889 onward as an architect.<sup>22</sup> By 1894, he was working for Ernest Flagg and in September 1894 he left for Olympia, Washington, to superintend the construction of the Washington State Capitol, one of Flagg's first commissions.<sup>23</sup> Copeland was still in Olympia in 1896 when he and Herbert Dole entered into a competition to design a new County Court House for Paterson, New Jersey.<sup>24</sup> By 1898, only the foundations of the Washington statehouse were finished, when the project was abandoned due to the financial problems. Copeland returned to New York and moved to Staten Island.<sup>25</sup>

Herbert Dole was born in Hawaii and studied architecture at Cornell University.<sup>26</sup> After graduating in 1894, he moved to Brooklyn and began working for Ernest Flagg. In 1898 he competed for and won a fellowship for two years of post-graduate study in advanced design at Cornell and travel in Europe.<sup>27</sup> He completed his studies in June 1900 and was awarded the Sands Medal in Architecture. In July 1900, "Trade Notes" in *Carpentry and Building* announced that



“H.L. Copeland and W.H. Dole, formerly with Ernest Flagg, the well-known architect [have] formed a co-partnership under the title of Copeland & Dole.”<sup>28</sup>

Soon after it was established, Copeland & Dole received an important commission to design Green Hills, a \$300,000 mansion near Lexington, Kentucky, from James Ben Ali Haggin, an immensely wealthy mine owner and real estate investor, who was one of the country’s foremost racing enthusiasts.<sup>29</sup> Works for other clients included flats buildings on East 31<sup>st</sup> Street and West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street in Manhattan; Outside of New York City, Copeland & Dole submitted designs for a new Kentucky State Capitol Building in 1904, won a competition to design a large Carnegie Library in downtown Fresno, California (1901-04, demolished), built a fraternity house for Alpha Tau Omega at Cornell (1900-01, enlarged 1908), and planned the Vanity Fair amusement park (opened 1907) on the outskirts of Providence, Rhode Island.<sup>30</sup> The Mills Hotel No. 3 was the firm’s most important commission in New York City and is one of its few surviving works.<sup>31</sup>

### “An Attractive and Pleasant Home”

Mills Hotel No. 3 opened for business to great fanfare and considerable press on October 22, 1907, with accounts of the new hotel appearing in newspapers as far away as San Francisco and Salem, Oregon.<sup>32</sup> The *New York Times* deemed the new hotel to be “the finest for the use of men of limited means in the world” and the *New York Observer & Chronicle* remarked that no effort had been spared in making it “an attractive and pleasant home for clerks, salesmen and all self-respecting men.”<sup>33</sup> According to one newspaper account “the hotel had not been open an hour before fourscore persons placed their names on the books.”<sup>34</sup> Guests were charged 30 cents per night for an eight-foot-by-six-foot room or 40 cents per night for an eight-by-eight room, slightly higher rates than at the other Mills Hotels, but still a bargain for a hotel only a block away from the Broadway theater district. Some rooms were set aside for night workers, although most guests were required to vacate their rooms between nine in the morning and six in the evening. The restaurant was opened to the general public including women and proved to be a popular attraction.

In 1909 Darius O. Mills deeded his three hotels and two model tenements to the Mills Hotel Trust, with himself, his son Ogden Mills, and his daughter Elizabeth Mills Reid, wife of publisher Whitelaw Reid, as trustees. The trust was to continue for “the further life of the youngest of Mr. D.O. Millis’s present descendants who shall be living at Ogden Mills death.”<sup>35</sup> Mills died in 1910 and his obituaries treated his hotel projects as perhaps the greatest of his many achievements. In 1912, Mills House No. 3 made headlines when Elizabeth Reid and her husband Whitelaw Reid, who had been the Ambassador to the Court of St. James, hosted Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, his wife the Duchess of Connaught, their daughter Princess Patricia, and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., on a tour of the building.<sup>36</sup> Like the other Mills Hotels, it seems to have been a success and returned a modest three to four percent return on Mills’ investment.

By 1909 Darius Ogden Mills’ three hotels were so well known that “Mills Hotel” had become a generic term for similar subsidized men’s hotel projects in other cities in this country, notably Chicago, and in Europe, with which D.O. Mills had no direct involvement.<sup>37</sup> The hotel’s location near the Broadway theaters and commercial district and Pennsylvania Station, made it a desirable low-cost residence for a variety of short-term and long-term guests. Like most of the model housing projects of the day, the Mills Hotel was racially segregated, renting rooms only to whites. (Mills had been an investor in the City & Suburban Homes Company which had built the Tuskegee (1902) and Hampton (1910), two rare model tenements built expressly for blacks.) The 1910 Federal census indicates that many of the Mills Hotel guests were clerks, mechanics, workers in the building trades, printing industry employees, chauffeurs and truck drivers, and hotel and food service workers. It was also a popular stopping place for traveling salesmen and railroad workers. Its proximity to the theater district, low prices, and relatively high level of amenities made it a real

bargain for people in the entertainment industry. In May 1910, when the census was taken, the hotel's residents included stage hands, grips, several actors and musicians, a circus clown, the author-playwright Julius Widekind, and actor-songwriter-producer George M. Cohan.<sup>38</sup> By 1915 there were over 40 actors living at the hotel, as well as several musicians, writers, and artists.<sup>39</sup> Rudolph Valentino later recalled that in 1913 when he was searching for work as an actor and dancer, he was forced to pawn his clothes to pay for a "cubbyhole" room at the Mills Hotel [likely this hotel given its show business associations].

By 1920, most of the hotel's residents were blue collar workers, restaurant employees, and salesmen.<sup>40</sup> There were also several garment industry employees, reflecting the beginnings of the phenomenal growth of the Garment Center in the 1920s. One noteworthy guest was the nineteen-year old William Saroyan, who later published a story "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze," recounting his time in New York at Mills Hotel No. 3.<sup>41</sup>

In April 1930, when the census was compiled, the full effects of the Depression were taking hold.<sup>42</sup> The majority of residents at the hotel were unemployed and at least half listed their profession in the census as "laborer" doing "odd jobs." The few residents who were employed were working as taxi drivers, food service workers, printers, salesmen, and in the fashion industry.

By the time of the 1940 census, the economy had improved considerably. The majority of the Mills Hotels residents were still blue collar workers, salesmen, and food service employees.<sup>43</sup> Several residents, including a blacksmith, listed the WPA as their employer. There were several entertainers and actors, including singer-bandleader Jack Miller, who was working as the piano accompanist and orchestra director for Kate Smith.<sup>44</sup> Almost all of the guests listed in the 1940 census were white, with the exception of a Japanese waiter. A survey of African-American periodicals and newspapers databases indicate that these racial policies remained in place until the late 1940s-early 1950s, when the *New York Amsterdam News* began to carry articles about hotel residents.

On March 28, 1940, a ceremony was held at Mills Hotel No. 3, when Daniel Driscoll, a young Irish tenor from Boston looking for radio work in New York, became the "50,000,000<sup>th</sup> man to register at a Mills Hotel." Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, Controller Joseph D. McGoldrick, City Council President Newbold Morris, Lieut. General Hugh A. Drum, Rear Admiral Clark H. Woodward, and a dozen other officials were on hand for the celebration. Touring the hotel, Mayor LaGuardia remarked that "the Mills 'serves a very useful purpose' and was an early pioneer' in the matter of low-cost housing."<sup>45</sup> He added that it had been "operated very efficiently and successfully" and that he had "received complaints about every hotel in town – but never the Mills." The Mayor said that the "inspiration" of modern public housing could be traced to the success of the hotel.

"If it was possible in a large city to maintain and operate a chain of hotels with cheerful surroundings and sanitary rooms, open to all at low rates, why wasn't it possible to do the same on a larger scale in public housing?" he continued.<sup>46</sup>

### Subsequent History

A few months after the celebration took place in 1940, the successor trustees to the Mills Hotel Trust, Ogden Mills Reid, Gladys Mills Phipps, and Henry Carnegie Phipps, decided to lease the space occupied by the restaurant at Mills Hotel No. 3 to the Trade Bank & Trust Company. Executed between 1940 and 1941 to the designs of Fellheimer & Wagner, alterations for the bank included the installation of new terra-cotta facings on the basement and first floor of the Seventh Avenue façade and western half of the West 36<sup>th</sup> Street façade and the creation of a new entrance on Seventh Avenue.

Mills Hotel No. 3 remained in operation until 1954 when the building was sold by the estate of Arthur [Ogden?] Mills and Elizabeth Mills Field [Reid?] to real estate investors Hugh K. McGovern and David Kamerman.<sup>47</sup> The purchasers announced plans for a gut renovation to convert the building into stores, offices, and showrooms for the garment industry. Designs for a new aluminum clad façade were published in August 1954.<sup>48</sup> Two years later, with the renovations stalled, McGovern and Kamerman sold the building to the Penn-Keystone Realty Corporation, headed by Alexander Gross, who owned the Apthorp Apartments and later purchased the Hotel New Yorker. Penn-Keystone continued to operate the building as the low-cost Keystone Hotel but made significant alterations to its lower stories in 1957-58. The first story was lowered to ground level, a new mezzanine (second) story was created, and the main entrance was shifted to 485 Seventh Avenue. Storefronts were installed along Seventh Avenue and on the west side of the 36<sup>th</sup> Street while the sub-cellar, cellar, basement, first story and mezzanine to the east of the 36<sup>th</sup> entrance were altered for use as a parking garage. In contrast to the previous owners Penn-Keystone seems to have actively sought African American guests, placing weekly ads in the *New York Amsterdam News*, beginning in 1957.

Penn-Keystone borrowed heavily against the building in the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1975, after creditors forced a foreclosure, it was acquired by the Style Center Realty Corp. In 1980, it passed to the Apparel Center Building Corporation and the Fashion Avenue Atrium Corporation, Bruce Berger, principal partner. Berger began renovating the building for use as offices and showrooms by sportswear manufacturers. For the most part, changes were limited to the interior of the building but no longer extant masonry infill was installed in the storefronts and dark tinted glass was added to the mezzanine to “allow visitors to the restaurant planned for that space to view activity in the street.”<sup>49</sup> During the renovation, the center light courts in each wing were reduced in size and extensively altered to create atriums with new walls replacing the original brick courtyard walls and asymmetric pyramidal skylights installed on the roof replacing the original skylights above the main floor sitting rooms. The west atrium became a lobby for the main entrance to the building on Seventh Avenue; the east atrium became “a private landscaped garden for tenants and their guests.”<sup>50</sup>

By 1984 tenants included Warnaco (manufacturers of the Warner and Olga brands of lingerie and Calvin Klein lines), Rod Owens, J.G. Hook, and Whitmarsh Industries. In December 1984 the building was acquired by FANY-Seventh Avenue Associates, a joint venture chartered in Florida. FANY-Seventh Avenue Associates renovated the storefronts and redid the building’s entrance lobby in 1992. FANY-Seventh Avenue Associates also borrowed heavily against the building and lost it in a bankruptcy proceeding in 1995. After changing hands twice in the early 2000s, the building was acquired by Gedula 26 LLC and 485 Shur LLC.

Report researched and written by  
Gale Harris  
Research Department

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This section on lodging houses and the housing reform movement is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, *City and Suburban Homes Company, Avenue A (York Avenue) Estate Designation Report* (LP-1694), prepared by Gale Harris (New York: City of New York, 1990), 3-8; Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890, New York: Scribners, 1914), 80-95; Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of CA Press, 1994), 131-154; Paul Kennedy, "New York's Hundred Lodging Houses: The Evil Condition Under Which a Great Floating Population is Housed," *Charities and Commons* 13 (Feb. 18, 1905), 486-92; Todd De Pastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2003), 8-17, 74-75, 132-135; Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1030, 1159-1165; Richard Darby, "The Wayfarer's Lodge," *Harper's Weekly* (May 5, 1894), 429-30; Homer Folks, "Lodging of Homeless Men," *Charities Review* 8 (Mar. 1898), 22-25; John Lloyd Thomas, "Workingmen's Hotels," *Municipal Affairs* 3 (Mar. 1899), 73-94.

<sup>2</sup> Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*.

<sup>3</sup>Groth, 146.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>For Darius Ogden Mills see "Life of Mr. Mills," *New York Tribune*, Jan. 5, 1910,1; "Darius Ogden Mills," *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons); Mitchell C. Harrison, *Prominent & Progressive Americans* (New York: New York Tribune Co., 1902), 230-235; "Who's Who in Real Estate II," *Record & Guide*, Nov. 9, 1907,754; Katherine S. Howe, Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, et al. *Herter Brothers: Furniture and Interiors for a Gilded Age* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1994), 148-149.

<sup>6</sup> Mills served as the treasurer and regent of the University of California from 1868 to 1880, where he endowed a chair in philosophy and contributed generously to the Lisk Observatory. In New York City he was a generous donor to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History, and the New York Botanical Society, where he served as President of the Board of Managers.

<sup>7</sup>"Model Lodging Houses for New York," *Review of Reviews* 15 (Jan. 1897), 59.

<sup>8</sup>For Lord Rowton see "Montagu Corry, 1st Baron Rowton," @ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montagu\\_Corry,\\_1st\\_Baron\\_Rowton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montagu_Corry,_1st_Baron_Rowton); "Rowton Houses," @ <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Rowton>.

<sup>9</sup>"Model Lodging Houses for New York," 59.

<sup>10</sup>"Will Be World's Largest Hotel and Apartment House," *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1905, SM 5.

<sup>11</sup> For Mills House No. 1, Mills House No. 2, and the Mills Model Tenement see Thomas, "Workingmen's Hotels," 85-90; "Model Lodging Houses for New York," 60-61; Mardges Bacon, *Ernest Flagg: Beaux-Arts Architect and Urban Reformer* (New York: The Architectural History Foundation, 1986), 234-255; Jacob Riis, *The Battle with the Slum* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 154-174; "They Never Lack for Guests," *New York Tribune*, Sept. 24, 1897, D1; T. Alexander Hyde, "A Paying Philanthropy: The Mills Hotel," *The Arena* 20 (July 1898); 89;"Another Poor Man's Waldorf," *Zion's Herald* 76 (Aug. 10, 1898), 996; "Mills House No. 2," *New York Tribune*, Aug. 2, 1902.

<sup>12</sup>"Will Be World's Largest Hotel and Apartment House."

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Plans of the building were published in George B. Ford, "The Housing Problem – V, Lodging Houses," *The Brickbuilder* 18 (July 1909), 186. Twelve sheets of drawings survive at Avery Library; see Columbia University Libraries, Avery Drawings & Archives, Copeland & Dole, "Hotel for D.O. Mills at West 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Seventh Avenue." See also New York City Department of Buildings, New Building Permit 1643-1905 in the Block and Lot Folder for Bl. 812, lot 1 at the NYC Municipal Archives.

<sup>15</sup> "The Third Mills Hotel," *New York Tribune*, Nov. 21, 1905, 1.

<sup>16</sup> "The Mills Hotel No. 3," *Architects' and Builders' Magazine* 9 (Oct. 1907), 39.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "Room 346, Mills Hotel No. 3," *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 1908, X10.

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<sup>19</sup> “The Mills Hotel No. 3,” *Architects’ and Builders’ Magazine* 9 (Oct. 1907), 39.

<sup>20</sup> “New Mills Hotel Opens,” *New Yorker Observer & Chronicle* 43 (Oct. 24, 1907), 542.

<sup>21</sup> The information on Harry L. Copeland’s family and early career is based on United States Census, 1880, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York, ED 137, 38; Brooklyn Directories 1879, 1886-1897; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), *Passport Applications January 2, 1906-March 31, 1925*, Paul Worthington Copeland, passport application, June 2, 1920, ARC Identifier 583830, MLR, A1534.

<sup>22</sup> Among Copeland’s early works were Mt. Olivet Presbyterian Church on Evergreen Avenue in Brooklyn, a group of seven rowhouses in Park Slope, and a store on Willoughby Avenue in Brooklyn. For Mount Olivet see “A Good Year’s Work,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, Jan. 9, 1891, 5; “To Get Money for a New Edifice,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, Dec. 17, 1890, 4; “The Rev. Mr. Junor’s Young Men: Their Library in Mount Olivet Church Formally Opened,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, Oct. 30, 1891, 4. For the other buildings “Kings County,” *Real Estate Record & Guide*, Feb. 20, 1892, 305; Apr. 8, 1892, 534.

<sup>23</sup> “State of Washington’s Capital,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, Sept. 1, 1894, 9. On the Capitol building, see “Washington State Capitol,” Wikipedia, @ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington\\_State\\_Capitol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_State_Capitol).

<sup>24</sup> “Architects Are Angered,” *New York Times*, Jan 3, 1897, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Staten Island Directories. 1898-1913.

<sup>26</sup> This is information on W. Herbert Dole’s family and early career is based on “Daniel Dole.” @ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel\\_Dole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Dole); “Sanford B. Dole,” @ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanford\\_B.\\_Dole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanford_B._Dole); “Sanford Ballard Dole,” *Dictionary of American Biography*, “Wonderful Athletic Record of the Family of Doles,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, Aug. 23, 1903; Brooklyn Directories, 1895-1913; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), *Passport Applications 1795-1905*, William Herbert Dole passport application, May 11, 1899, ARC Identifier 566612, MLR, A1 508.

<sup>27</sup> Although his parents remained in California, W.H. Dole was already living in Brooklyn in 1890 when he was awarded a scholarship to Cornell; see “Awarded Cornell Scholarships,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 27, 1890, 5. For his graduate career see “A Brooklyn Man’s Prize,” *New York Times*, Nov. 4, 1898, 7; “Fellowship Competition in Architecture,” *Cornell Daily Sun*, Sept. 28, 1898, 3; “Dole Wins the Fellowship,” *Cornell Daily Sun*, Nov. 4, 1898, 2; “Annual Sage Reception,” *Cornell Daily Sun*, Nov. 14, 1899, 2; “Advanced Degrees,” *Cornell Daily Sun*, June 21, 1900, 4.

<sup>28</sup> “Trade Notes,” *Carpentry and Building*, July 1900, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Haggin also had Copeland & Dole design a series of buildings for his thoroughbred horse farm in Lexington (the famed Elmendorf Farm) and a girl’s boarding school in Versailles, Kentucky (erected 1902-03), which was renamed Margaret Hall in honor of Haggin’s wife, Margaret Pearl Voorhies Haggin. “Green Hills” was demolished in 1929; the farmhouse and stables at the Elmendorf Farm survive; Margaret Hall is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. See Nancy Lewis Greene, “‘Green Hills’ and Its Thoroughbreds,” *Town & Country*, Apr. 8, 1905, 16-18; Marty Poynter Hedgepeth, *Margaret Hall National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form* (Washington, D.C.: United States Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987); “Elmendorf Farm,” @ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dlendorf\\_Farm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dlendorf_Farm).

<sup>30</sup> William H. Jordy, Ronald J. Onorato, and William McKenzie Woodward, *Buildings of Rhode Island* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 435. See also Kentucky Division of Historic Properties, “Kentucky State Capitol History,” @ <http://historicproperties.ky.gov/hp/capitol1/history/complete+history/>.

<sup>31</sup> Copeland and Dole dissolved their firm in late 1908 or early 1909. Copeland then practiced on his own, specializing in residential architecture on Staten Island, and around 1915 relocated to Washington State. Dole found a job as an architectural draftsman in the New York State Public Service Commission’s Bureau of Subway Construction, where his friend and former draftsman Squire Vickers was the chief designing architect. Dole became Vickers’ assistant architect and second in command. Over the next 30 years Vickers and Dole would oversee and in some cases personally take part in the design of the IRT, BMT, and IND subway and elevated lines, stations, and infrastructure. Among his other tasks, Dole “for the most part” was responsible for the design of the colored tile mosaics and bands in the subway stations. In 1934 both Dole and Vickers were laid off from the Department of Transportation in a restructuring plan. By 1937, Dole had returned as head of the Subways Division. Vickers was also rehired. Dole remained with the Department of Transportation until at least 1939.

<sup>32</sup> “Mills Hotel No. 3 to Open on Monday,” *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1907, 10; “Mills Hotels Success,” *New York Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1907, 2; “View New Mills Hotel,” *New York Tribune*, Oct. 18, 1907, 1; “Practical Philanthropy,”

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*Providence Journal*, rpt. *New York Tribune*, Oct. 23, 1907, 6; “Fine Hotel for Benefit of Poor,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 19, 1907, 3; “An Uncommon Philanthropy,” *Deseret Evening News* [Salt Lake City], pt. 2, 1; “New Mills Hotel Opened,” *Zion’s Herald* 45 (Nov. 6, 1907), 411; “New Mills Hotel Opens,” *New Yorker Observer & Chronicle*, 542; “Cost of Living in New York,” *Daily Capital Journal* [Salem, Oregon], Nov. 12, 1907.

<sup>33</sup> “Mills Hotel No. 3 to Open on Monday,” *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1907, 10; “New Mills Hotel Opens,” *New Yorker Observer & Chronicle*, 542.

<sup>34</sup> “New Mills Hotel Opened,” *Zion’s Herald*, 411.

<sup>35</sup> “Mills Hotel Change,” *New York Tribune*, Jan. 10, 1909, 9.

<sup>36</sup> The visit was particularly gratifying to the Duke and Duchess, who had formerly been involved with the Rowton Houses in London. The Duke characterized Mills House No. 3 “as one of finest philanthropies he had ever seen.”

See “Sightseeing Continues to Please Connaughts,” *New York Tribune*, Jan. 25, 1912, 1. Also “Royalty Dined in Bower of Roses,” *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1912, 2.

<sup>37</sup> “Health Giving Tenements,” *The Sun*, Mar. 7, 1909, 8. “A Mills Hotel for Chicago,” *New York Tribune*. One Chicago writer even characterized a stable for aging police and fire horses as the “Mills Hotel for horses.” See “Mounds a Home for Old Fire Horses,” *The Day Book*, Feb. 10, 1912, 3.

<sup>38</sup> United States Census, 1910, Manhattan, New York County, New York, 20<sup>th</sup> Ward, ED 1192, 12B-22B.

<sup>39</sup> New York State Census, 1915, New York County, Ward 2, Assembly District 27, ED 12, 8-26.

<sup>40</sup> United States Census, 1920, Manhattan, New York County, New York. AD 10, ED 776, 4A-11A.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Arax, “Fresno Finally Throws Wake for Literary Lion,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 4, 2002; William Saroyan Society, “Chronology,” @ <http://www.williamsaroyansociety.org/chronology>; William Saroyan, “Dear Yep, Old Boy . . . .” [William Saroyan letters to Yep Moradian and Roxie Moradian published by the Armenian General Benevolent Union] @http: [www.agbu.org/publications/article.asp?A\\_ID=400](http://www.agbu.org/publications/article.asp?A_ID=400).

<sup>42</sup> United States Census, 1930, Manhattan, New York County, New York, AD 10, ED 776, 1A-17B.

<sup>43</sup> United States Census, 1940, Manhattan, New York County, New York, AD 10, ED 31-854,81A-117B.

<sup>44</sup> “Jack Miler - You’re My Everything (1932),” @ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6P555VtEssM>.

<sup>45</sup> “LaGuardia Greets a Sleepy Guest As the Mills Hotels’ 50,000,000<sup>th</sup>,” *New York Times*, Mar. 28, 1940, 21.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> “Mills Hotel Sold on Seventh Ave,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1954, 29.

<sup>48</sup> “Buyers to Rebuild Old Mills Hotel,” *New York Times*, Aug. 1, 1954, R1.

<sup>49</sup> “Space for Fashion Industry Being Created on 7<sup>th</sup> Ave.,” *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1981, B5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of the building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Mills Hotel No. 3 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, Mills Hotel No. 3, erected in 1906-07 to the designs of Copeland & Dole, is an important reminder of the reform movement that attempted to address the housing problems of the nation's working poor at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; that this 16-story building, which originally had 1,885 small single bedrooms, was the third and largest of three model residential hotels for single working men erected by banker-philanthropist Darius Ogden Mills; that the scale of the building, which the *New York Times* described in 1906 as the "world's biggest hotel," and the management techniques employed by Mills' staff allowed him to lower costs per room while offering guests "a larger equivalent for their money" than was common in commercial lodging houses of the period; that journalists praised the building as the "finest for the use of men of limited means" and "a pride to the city;" that the building is one of the few surviving works by the architectural firm of Copeland & Dole and is the firm's most important surviving work in New York City; that Harry Lewis Copeland, and William Herbert Dole had worked for the noted architect Ernest Flagg and that Mills Hotel No. 3 incorporated a double light-court plan (courts now altered) similar to that devised by Flagg for Mills House No. 1 (1896-97); that clad with limestone, light-colored brick, and terra cotta, and embellished with Renaissance ornament, Mills House No. 3 is a fine example of the neo-Renaissance style; that after Mills' death in 1910, a family trust continued to operate the hotel as a low cost residence for single men; that although the majority of guests were blue collar workers, salesmen, and hotel and service industry employees, the hotel's location near the theater district also made it particularly popular with actors and entertainers; that in 1940 Mayor La Guardia while taking part in a ceremony at this hotel welcoming the 50,000,000<sup>th</sup> guest to the Mills Hotel chain praised the Mills Hotels as an inspiration for the modern public housing movement; that the Mills family retained ownership of the building until 1954 and that it remained a low cost hotel until the early 1980s; that in the 1980s it became the Fashion Avenue Atrium and was remodeled for use as offices and show rooms; that aside from the alterations to its lower stories, its facades remain largely intact and the building retains its historical and architectural significance as a reminder of the Housing Reform Movement and the Progressive Era.

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 Mills Hotel No. 3, 485 Seventh Avenue (aka 481-489 Seventh Avenue, 155-163 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street), Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 812, Lot 1 as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Adi Shamir Baron, Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin,

Michael Devonshire, John Gustaffson, Roberta Washington, Commissioners





**Mills Hotel No. 3**  
485 Seventh Avenue  
(aka 481-489 Seventh Avenue, 155-163 West 36th Street)  
Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 812, Lot 1  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, October 2014*





**Mills Hotel No. 3**  
Seventh Avenue Facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, October 2014*



**Mills Hotel No. 3**  
*Photo: Brown Bros., 1940s*





**Mills Hotel No. 3**  
Upper Stories Seventh Avenue Facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, October 2014*





**Mills Hotel No. 3**  
West 36th Street Facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Braze, October 2014*

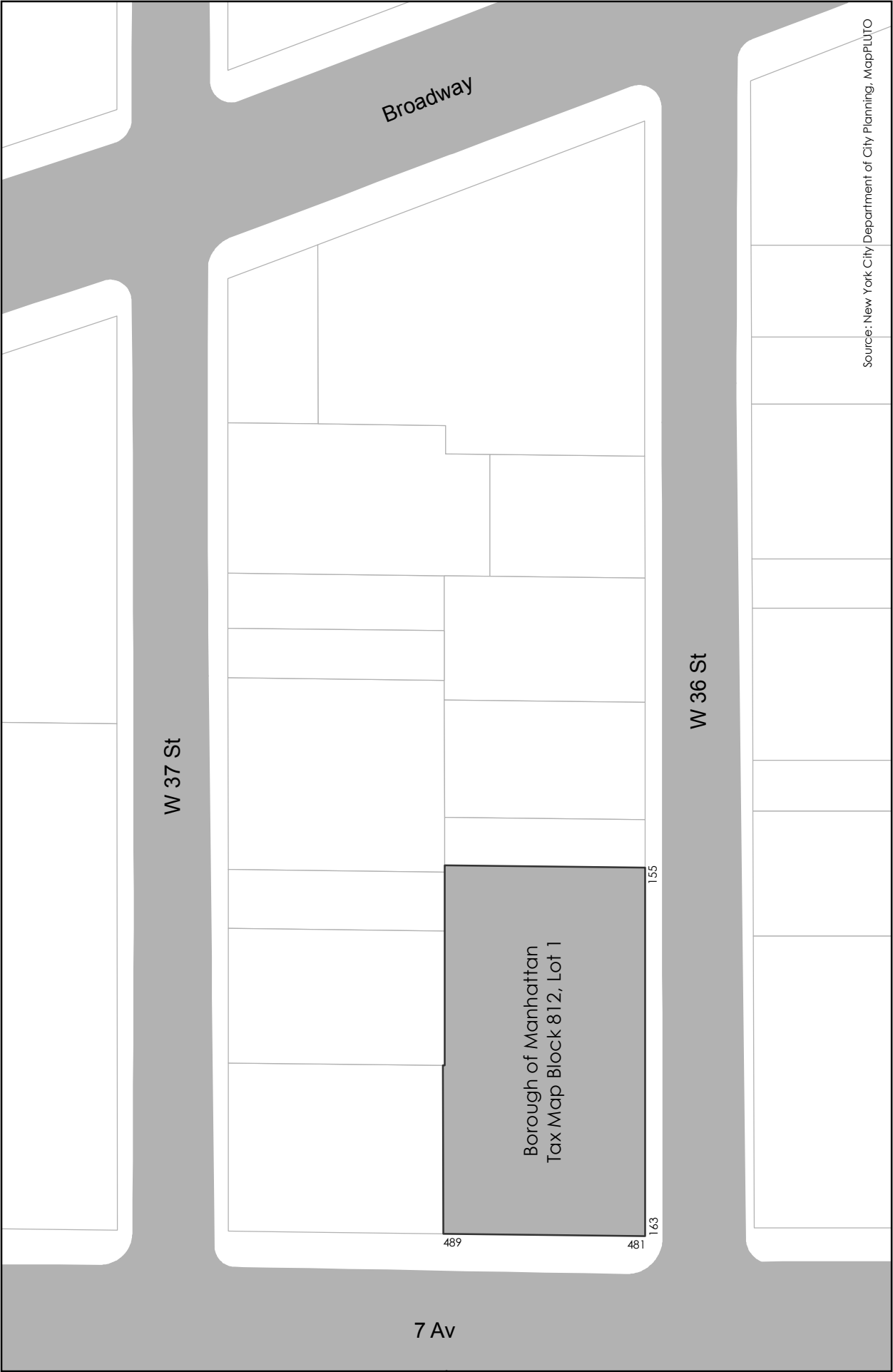


**Mills Hotel No. 3**  
West 36th Street Light Court  
*Photo: Gale Harris, May 2010*





**Mills Hotel No. 3**  
Detail Upper Stories and Cornice  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, June 2012*  
Detail West 36th Street Entrance Surround  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, May 2010*



**Mills Hotel No. 3**

485 Seventh Avenue (aka 481-489 Seventh Avenue; 155-163 West 36th Street), Manhattan  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 812, Lot 1  
 Designated: October 28, 2014 (LP-2424)