

SHELTON HOTEL, 525 Lexington Avenue (aka 523-527 Lexington Avenue, 137-139 East 48th Street, 136-140 East 49th Street), Manhattan
Built: 1922-23; architect, Arthur Loomis Harmon
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1303, Lot 53

On July 19, 2016 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Shelton Hotel and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. A representative of the owner spoke in favor of the designation acknowledging the building's architectural and cultural importance. There were five other speakers in support of the designation including representatives of Borough President Gale Brewer, Community Board 6, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, and the Municipal Arts Society. A representative of the Real Estate Board of New York spoke in opposition to the designation. A representative of Council Member Daniel Garodnick submitted written testimony in support of the designation. Two other individuals have also submitted emails in support of the designation.

Summary

Designed by architect Arthur Loomis Harmon and completed in 1923, the Shelton Hotel was one of the first "skyscraper" residential hotels. With its powerful massing it played an important role in the development of the skyscraper in New York City. Located on the east side of Lexington Avenue between 48th and 49th Streets, it is one of the premiere hotels constructed along the noted "hotel alley" stretch of Lexington Avenue, which was built as part of the redevelopment of this section of East Midtown that followed the opening of Grand Central Terminal and the Lexington Avenue subway line.

Even while it was under construction the Shelton Hotel was recognized as the first successful embodiment of the massing requirements of the 1916 Zoning Law, notable for its soaring expression of height, powerful simple massing, striking silhouette, and exceptional handling of materials and details. The 31-story-plus-penthouse building is designed in the Lombard Revival style incorporating medieval and Renaissance details. Above a beautifully detailed limestone base, its facades are clad with multi-hued greyish-brown brick and terra cotta. There are three setbacks, stepping up to a central tower, and a picturesque hipped-roofed penthouse. Alternating flush and recessed bays topped with corbelled friezes emphasize the structure's verticality. Harmon battered the building's walls, increasing the incline at each setback to counter natural perspectival distortions, relieved the repetition of hotel rooms windows with recessed vertical panels that fostered shadows and contributed to the building's three-dimensionality, and suppressed horizontal lines to emphasize the structure's verticality. While the building is nominally Lombard Revival in style, Harmon deliberately avoided relying on any particular period for his details since he believed that "the masses of such modern buildings have no architectural precedence."



At the time it was built, the Shelton was considered the tallest hotel in the world at 31 stories. Articles lauding its design appeared in all of the major architectural journals and the popular press and it received awards from the Architectural League of New York and the American Institute of Architects. The Shelton inspired the design of numerous hotels and apartment houses in New York and throughout the country and it was an important precedent for future setback skyscrapers its monumental scale and simplified silhouettes helping to popularize, what skyscraper historian Carol Willis describes as “the aesthetic of simple, sculptural mass that became the benchmark of progressive design by the mid-twenties.”

Originally built as a men’s residence with 1,200 bedrooms plus library, lounge, and athletic facilities, the building opened its doors to women in 1924. A symbol of modern New York, it became a popular residence for theater people, including actor Humphrey Bogart, Group Theatre founder Harold Clurman, playwright Tennessee Williams and artists, most notably Georgia O’Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz who lived at Shelton from 1925 to 1936 and created important and influential work there. It is currently the New York Marriott East Side. The Shelton Hotel is remarkably intact; it retains its iconic form and most of its original Lombard Revival ornament.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The Shelton Hotel is a 31-story-plus-penthouse setback building, located at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 49th Street.¹ At its base, the Shelton is basically square in plan, except for a 15-story, 40-foot-wide wing that extends through the block to East 48th Street. At the third story the main building sets back at the rear into a u-plan with a long center light court facing eastward. The other facades have shallower recessed light courts framed by pavilions. There are additional setbacks at the 15th, 21th, and 31st stories, with a hipped-roofed penthouse capping the tower.

All of the building’s street facades are faced with limestone at the first and second story. The Lexington Avenue and 49th Street facades incorporate two-story arcades. The upper stories are clad with multi-hued greyish-brown bricks trimmed with limestone and terra cotta. The design features alternating projecting and recessed bays, decorative brick projections arranged both in files to provide vertical accents and in random patterns, arched corbel tables inspired by medieval machicolations, and details (including sculpture) loosely drawn from North Italian Early Christian, Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance sources.

In 1935 the ground story façades were modified by the introduction of new doorways and a storefront was installed at the north end of the Lexington Avenue façade. These changes were largely reversed in a 1977-78 alteration, but some doorways remain that were not original to the 1923 design and the windows have been lengthened and a fenced area created in the center bays of the 49th Street facade. In addition a large marquee has been added to the Lexington Avenue entrance loggia and awnings have been added to many windows. There have also been signage changes. On the upper stories, there are noticeable areas of brick-replacement and repointing. Openings for through-the-wall air conditioners have been introduced in some areas of the façade. Most of the windows (originally multi-light sash, French doors, and transoms at the base of the building and one-over-one sash on the upper stories) have been replaced. Originally the 15th-story setbacks and the 48th Street wing were capped by roof gardens with pergolas. Many of these rooftop terraces and structures survive, but have been altered. Some decorative finials and sculpture were replicated and the loggia columns were stabilized and repaired during an alteration in 2000-02.

Lexington Avenue (west) façade:

Historic: Base – Central arcaded entrance loggia with unfluted Corinthian columns resting on high plinths ornamented with lion heads and capped by impost blocks decorated with relief figures of athletes and readers, molded archivolts, gargoyles, molded cornice resting on corbels; parapet with decorative mask reliefs; low stone stoop, masonry porch floor, three entrance surrounds and lintels over windows decorated with Renaissance arabesques, arched niches between entrance bays; arched double-light second-story windows; rectangular window openings at first story of corner pavilions, projecting granite entrance surround at south end of south pavilion; square mezzanine window with iron grille above south entrance; at second-story corner pavilions have rectangular windows and central arched double-light window openings (originally contained French doors topped by transoms) with stone balconies resting on console brackets beneath the arched windows (north balcony and brackets replicas installed in 1978) and inset relief panels decorated with wreaths and scrolls above rectangular windows of outer bays; molded cornices resting on corbels decorated with flowers and masks; brass siamese firehose connection.

Upper Stories – 3rd to 14th stories - corner pavilions window bays set off by files of projecting bricks, window bays on pavilions capped by arched corbel tables and parapets decorated with diamond inlay; center section of façade articulated with alternating projecting and recessed bays, ornamented with projecting bricks, 14th story terminated with sections of arched corbel tables including rounded projections over the recessed bays. Fifteenth to 20th stories – cabled colonettes and angled projections at corners of façade; alternating projecting and recessed window bays; brick-and-glass enclosures and pergolas on 15th-story terraces above pavilions; arched windows with stone trefoil transoms alternate with square-headed windows at 15th story; circular terracotta plaques with rosettes between 15th story and 16th stories; chevron moldings, corbels, and arched corbel tables decorate parapet above 20th story. Twenty-first to 30th stories – alternating recessed and projecting bays; smaller window openings in recessed bays; arched corbel tables cap the recessed bays; corners set off by cabled colonettes topped by angled griffins (griffins and brackets replicas of originals). Thirty-first story – double-height story; recessed bays lit by giant arched windows; projected bays decorated with files of projected bricks; end bays pierced by small attic windows; gargoyles project from three center bays; decorative panels on parapet over recessed bays; bear-like grotesques carrying amphorae at roofline.

Alterations: Base – window openings modified to create wide entrances at north end of north pavilion and at center of south pavilion; doors and windows replaced; marquee installed over central entrance loggia; canopy at north pavilion entrance; metal railings and access ramp on porch; metal menu box and sign flank north pavilion entrance; metal signs on porch columns, through-the-wall air-conditioner openings in masonry on rear porch wall between bays one and two, four and five (reading north to south); storage cabinet affixed to wall between bays three and four; original wrought-iron lanterns over entrance porch doors removed; non-historic lights over doors and windows on porch and on vaults of the three center arches; light fixture on south section façade near porch; security camera on wall north of entrance porch; electric junction boxes and bells on rear wall of porch; flagpoles mounted on parapet; painted enclosure for mechanical equipment on porch roof.

Upper Stories – brickwork replaced over many window lintels, at the 14th story and on the north face of the south pavilion, at the 14th-story corners of the south pavilion, and for much of the 31st-story; openings created for through-the-wall air conditioners for approximately half the

windows; most windows replaced; parapet walls reconstructed at 15th story and corner finials and flagpole removed from parapet at the 21st-story; limestone griffins replaced with glass fiber reinforced concrete replicas; mechanical equipment on setback above 31st story; penthouse roof replaced.

49th Street (north) façade:

Historic: Basic articulation of Lexington Avenue façade repeated with recessed arcade in place of loggia; arcade enriched with decorative panels of colored stone laid in a chevron pattern set beneath second-story windows; base of eastern pavilion housing service areas of hotel incorporates a mezzanine level, has square-headed windows, stone balustrades with quatrefoil tracery at second story.

Alterations: Base – windows replaced; illuminated sign beneath second-story window at west end of façade; brass siamese firehose connection on water table near western end of façade; masonry removed and window openings lengthened in center bays; entrance with low stoop and railings created in westernmost bay of arcaded center section of the facade; awnings installed above entry and first-story windows in center section of facade; light fixtures installed on pilasters in center section; low iron railing installed on podium in front of windows in center section of façade; exhaust fan above first-story window bay 8 (reading west to east); first- and second-second story windows sealed on eastern pavilion; louver inserted in masonry infill easternmost second story window of pavilion.

Upper Stories – Considerable patching with non-matching brick especially at the corners of the two end pavilions, over windows where lintels replaced; on the projected bays and 31st story of the tower; parapets above the corner pavilions and 20th story rebuilt; many through-the-wall air conditioners; windows replaced.

48th Street (south) façade and wing:

Around 2009 a building was constructed at the northeast corner of Lexington Avenue and 48th Street largely blocking the view of the lower portions of the Shelton from the southwest. The 48th Street wing occupies the entire width of the lot only at the first and second story, setting back to the east above the second story at the front of the wing and above the first story at the rear to form a light court. To the east of the wing there was a narrow vacant lot that is now a public plaza. It affords a view of the east wall on the wing and the south wall of the main building. A one-story plus mezzanine extension projects from the south wall of the main building into the court. Sections of 48th Street façade are also visible from across 48th Street and from Third Avenue.

Historic: Basic articulation matches other facades except at base of building.

Wing façade has multi-hued limestone cladding at base; at first story quadripartite window with stone mullions, tracery, and decorative stone lunette, arched drip molding; flanked by paired arched windows with stone tracery; leaded glass lights; at second story quadripartite and paired arcades set off projected sill and lintel moldings; windows set back into façade to form balconies; projecting block accents; gargoyles, chevron frieze, simple stone cornice resting on block corbels. Upper story articulation of wing 48th Street façade matches the treatment of corner pavilions on other facades; west face of wing – only southernmost bay now visible; east face of wing – irregular arrangement of window bays, decorative elements including arched tables, projecting piers repeated from street facades; 15th-story roof terrace of wing – parapet wall coped with limestone; brick pavilion with tiled hipped roof at south end of roof; hipped roofed

porch entry to solarium. On main building south wall – round-arched second-story windows, which originally lit the hotel library, retain original multi-light steel casement windows and transoms.

Alterations: Wing – façade stonework removed at first story to create entry in west bay, leaded glass windows in center and east bay have protective glazing; vent, DEP meter box, hose coupling installed on dado west end of façade; projecting brackets on piers flanking door; patching on pier between door and center window; east wall original first and second story windows sealed; entire wall reclad with concrete panels; metal plaque near south end wall; Upper Stories Wing – windows sealed on west side of wing; brickwork replaced over many window lintels, at the southeast corner of the wing, at 14th story on northeast corner of the wing, and southern half of the 14th story on the east wall of wing; openings created for through-the-wall air conditioners beneath the east windows of the façade and most of the windows on the east wall; most windows replaced; wireless antenna mounted on the roof of the two-story portion; HVAC mechanical equipment on one-story portion; pipe railing at edge of one-story roof; 15th-story roof garden terrace – pergolas, fountain, decorative urns and sculpture removed; paving replaced, HVAC equipment and fence installed; pipe railing along parapet.

Main Building – one-story plus mezzanine extension in the east courtyard reclad with concrete panels; electrical conduit pipes, cameras affixed to wall.

Upper Stories Main Building – Considerable patching with non-matching brick especially over windows where lintels replaced; in recessed courts and 31st story of the tower; parapets above the corner pavilions and 20th story rebuilt; many through-the-wall air conditioners; windows replaced; large dish antenna and wireless antennas at southwest corner setback above 31st story.

Rear (east) façade:

The rear façade is visible at street level from Third Avenue and 49th Street. It is organized into three sections consisting of two outer wings and a recessed light court, which contains a massive chimney. A bridge connects the two wings at the 15th story. Other historic bridges have been removed, replaced by metal trusses.

Historic: Outer wings echo the massing and articulation of the corner bays on the main façade; court walls are undecorated, have plain square-headed windows; top section of chimney articulated with corbeled arches; small chimney with arched cap at north 21st-story setback.

Alterations: Extensive areas of brick patching, especially at corners of the two wings and above the window lintels; HVAC equipment installed on 21st-story setbacks; metal pipe vent on 21st-story chimney; 31st-story parapet rebuilt; masonry extension on courtyard chimney; dish and vertical antennas; some of penthouse windows infilled with brick.

SITE HISTORY

Evolution of East Midtown²

Pre-Grand Central Era

In 1831, the recently-established New York & Harlem Railroad signed an agreement with New York State permitting the operation of steam locomotives on Fourth (now Park) Avenue, from 23rd Street to the Harlem River. Five years later, in 1836, several important street openings occurred in East Midtown. These included 42nd Street, Lexington Avenue and Madison Avenue. Initially, trains ran at grade, sharing Fourth Avenue with pedestrians and vehicles. In 1856, locomotives were banned below 42nd Street -- the current site of a maintenance barn and fuel lot. Though rail passengers continued south by horse car, this decision set the stage for East Midtown to become an important transit hub.

Cornelius Vanderbilt acquired control of New York & Harlem, Hudson River, and the New York Central Railroads in 1863-67. Under his direction, a single terminal for the three railroads was planned and built, known as Grand Central Depot (1868-71, demolished). It was a large structure, consisting of an L-shaped head-house inspired by the Louvre in Paris, with entrances on 42nd Street and Vanderbilt Avenue, as well as a 652-foot-long train shed. The area immediately north, mainly between 45th and 49th Streets, served as a train yard. Traversed by pedestrian and vehicular bridges, this busy facility occupied an irregularly-shaped site that extended from Lexington to Madison Avenue.

The earliest surviving buildings in midtown are residences in Murray Hill, directly south of 42nd Street. An 1847 covenant stipulated that all houses be built with brick and stone and many handsome ones survive, particularly east of Park Avenue. Following the Civil War, residential development continued up Fifth Avenue, transforming the area between St. Patrick's Cathedral (1853-88) and Central Park (begun 1857, both are New York City Landmarks). Though most of the large mansions -- many owned by members of the Vanderbilt family -- have been lost, other impressive residences survive on the side streets, between Park and Fifth Avenues. New York City Landmarks in the East 50s include: The Villard Houses (1883-85), William & Ada Moore House (1898-1900), Morton & Nellie Plant House (1903-05), and the Fisk-Harkness House (1871/1906).

Terminal City

In 1902, 15 railroad passengers were killed in a rear-end collision in the Park Avenue Tunnel, near 56th Street. In response to this tragic accident, William J. Wilgus, chief engineer of the New York Central Railroad, proposed that not only should steam locomotives be eliminated from Manhattan but that the terminal be expanded and completely rebuilt. The city agreed and Grand Central Terminal (a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark) was completed in February 1913.

Wilgus envisioned the terminal as part of a city-with-the-city, knitted together by more than two dozen buildings constructed above the newly-submerged rail tracks. Faced with tan brick and limestone, these handsome neo-classical style buildings formed an understated backdrop to the monumental Beaux-Arts style terminal. A key example is the New York Central Building, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark. Erected by the railroad in 1927-29, it stands directly above the tracks and incorporates monumental archways that direct

automobile traffic towards the Park Avenue Viaduct (1917-19, a designated New York City Landmark). Grand Central Palace, a 13-story neo-classical style convention hall and exhibition building on the east side of Lexington Avenue between 46th Street and 47th Street, built by the Grand Central Railroad to the designs of Warren & Wetmore working in collaboration with Reed & Stem in 1910, became New York's principal venue for trade fairs and corporate displays.

The new terminal and subway attracted considerable commercial development to East Midtown, especially near 42nd Street, the original route of the IRT subway. Most of these buildings date to the 1910s and 1920s. In contrast to the neo-classical, City Beautiful, aesthetics that shaped Terminal City, these distinctive skyscrapers frequently incorporate unusual terra-cotta ornamentation inspired by medieval (and later, Art Deco) sources. Memorable examples include: the Bowery Savings Bank Building (1921-23, 1931-33) and the Chanin Building (1927-29, both designated New York City Landmarks).

In 1918, subway service was extended up Lexington Avenue, north of 42nd Street. Though Terminal City was planned with several hotels, such as the Biltmore and Commodore (both have been re-clad), more rooms were needed. A substantial number were located on Lexington Avenue, between 47th and 50th Streets, near the Grand Central Palace, which brought thousands of travelers to the area for trade fairs and events such as Westminster Kennel Club Show. Among the hotels that catered to this business were the Lexington and later the Shelton.

Post-World War II Era

Following the end of the Second World War, the New York Central Railroad struggled with debt and entered a significant period of decline. In response, it began to terminate lot leases and sell off real estate properties. The impact of the situation was most powerfully felt on Park Avenue. Apartment buildings and hotels were quickly replaced by an influx of glassy office towers, with such pioneering mid-20th century Modern works as Lever House (1949-52, a New York City Landmark) and the Seagram Building (1954-56, a New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark). The success of these and other projects helped make Park Avenue (and East Midtown) one of Manhattan's most prestigious corporate addresses.

James T. Lee

James Thomas Lee (1877-1968) studied engineering at City College and was a graduate of Columbia Law School (1899). After a few years practicing law, he formed the Century Holding Company with Charles R. Fleischmann and built the Peter Stuyvesant Apartments at 98th Street and Riverside Drive in 1908 and the Italian Renaissance-inspired 998 Fifth Avenue at 81st Street (McKim, Mead and White, William S. Richardson, partner in charge, 1910-12, a designated New York City Landmark), which became one of the most prestigious residences in the city. Between 1913 and 1920 Lee headed companies that built a series of office buildings in the vicinity of Grand Central and Times Square. In the 1920s Lee reentered the residential market, establishing the Shelton Holding Company to build the Shelton Hotel in 1922-23, following it with apartment buildings at 420 Park Avenue in 1923 and 620 Park Avenue in 1924, the San Carlos Hotel at 150 East 50th Street in 1926, and the luxurious 740 Park Avenue in 1929-30. Lee also erected a bank and office building for the Farmers Loan & Trust Company at Fifth Avenue and 41st Street in 1925-26. In 1926 he joined Chase Bank as its real-estate adviser, taking charge of erecting a new headquarters building for the bank at 20 Pine Street, at the intersection of Nassau Street. In 1928 he was elected to the Board of Directors at Chase Bank and the following year became a vice president. He continued his association with Chase until

1943 when he became president of the Central Savings Bank. Although his primary focus was banking, in his later years he continued to invest in real estate and was involved in the assemblage of 1 Chase Plaza for Chase Bank.

Arthur Loomis Harmon³

Arthur Loomis Harmon (1878-1958) was born in Chicago and studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and at Columbia University, graduating in 1901. From 1902 to 1911 he practiced with the firm of McKim, Mead & White, during which time he supervised the construction of a major addition to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. For two years Harmon worked with the firm of Wallis & Goodwillie, and practiced independently from 1913 to 1929.

Among his important early commissions was an office and fireproof warehouse building for film distribution companies at 729 Seventh Avenue (1915). In 1916 he began his association with the Allerton House Company, the leading builder and operator of club hotels in the United States, noted for the quality of its architectural design and interior decoration. He designed three hotels for the chain in New York City including the Allerton Hotel at 145 East 39th Street (1916-18; a designated New York City Landmark) and the Allerton Hotel for Women at 128-30 East 57th Street (1921-23). The Shelton Hotel was his most famous independent work and won gold medals from the Architectural League of New York and the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1924.

In 1929, concerned that he lacked the resources to bid on large jobs, Harmon joined the firm of Richmond Harold Shreve (1877-1946) and William Frederick Lamb (1883-1952), which became Shreve, Lamb & Harmon (after 1943, Shreve, Lamb & Harmon Associates). He was a design partner in the firm and was involved in the final design stages for the Empire State Building (1929-31, a designated New York City Landmark) and in the design of 500 Fifth Avenue (1929-31, a designated New York City Landmark). He was also the principal designer for the addition to the Julliard School Building (now Manhattan School of Music) at 120 Claremont Avenue (1930-31), for a number of buildings at the Kent School, in Kent, Connecticut, and for Olin Hall at Cornell University (1941). He served as a consultant for Parkchester, Stuyvesant Town, and Peter Cooper Village housing developments.

Harmon was active for many years in architectural education and professional societies. He was president of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1937 to 1939; president of the Architectural League of New York from 1933 to 1935; a fellow of the American Institute of Architects; and an Academician of the National Academy of Design.

The Shelton Hotel Project

In December 1919, the International Sporting Club of New York, a new subscription organization aimed at improving boxing in the United States, announced its plans to erect a clubhouse and arena at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and 49th Street.⁴ The site, then occupied by several houses and a small apartment building, was considered ideal because of its proximity to Grand Central, “the subway, elevated and surface lines, and the many prominent clubs and hotels which dot the neighborhood.”⁵ The buildings were soon razed and the site excavated, but by 1921 the club’s founder and chief promoter had fled the country with a considerable share of its assets.⁶ In January 1922, the Lexington Avenue site was auctioned to satisfy the mortgage holders and was purchased by developer James T. Lee.⁷

Lee initially planned to build a 15-story apartment hotel on the site, but in March 1922 announced that he had decided to construct the highest hotel structure in the world, a 31-story

residential hotel for men to be known as the Shelton Hotel, and had commissioned Arthur Loomis Harmon, a specialist in hotel design, to prepare plans for the new building.⁸

A hybrid form, the apartment hotel or residential hotel was an immensely popular multiple dwelling type during the first decades of the 20th century.⁹ Offering more privacy than rooming houses and better accommodations for long-term occupants than transient hotels, residential hotels were equipped with standard hotel facilities such as imposing lobbies and well-appointed dining rooms and provided hotel services including doormen, receptionists, and cleaners. They ranged from palatial residences for the wealthy with large suites of rooms with private baths (but usually pantries rather than kitchens); to one or two bedroom apartments usually occupied by single people and childless couples actively pursuing business careers; to single-room residences with both private and shared baths, which were marketed primarily to young men and women just establishing their careers. Apartment hotels were found in most cities in the United States, but were particularly popular in New York City where apartments without individual kitchens were exempt from the height limitations and fireproofing restrictions imposed by Tenement House Act of 1901. Many developers took advantage of this loophole and the number of apartment hotels multiplied until the passage of the Multiple Dwelling Act of 1929 altered height and bulk restrictions and permitted “skyscraper” apartment buildings for the first time, eliminating the economic advantages of apartment hotels.

A subset of the apartment hotel, club hotels or residence clubs were tailored to the needs of single men and women and operated in a niche between YMCAs and YWCAs and exclusive private clubs with hotel rooms like the Yale Club or New York Athletic Club. As housing historian Paul Groth notes:

Residence clubs kept their rates down by providing very small rooms – almost exclusively single rooms – with day beds that converted to couches. ... The clubs kept staff to a minimum, especially in food service. Typically each club had its own restaurant and cafeteria or a restaurant that ran on self-service lines for breakfast and lunch and provided table service for dinner.”¹⁰

However, club hotels provided generous facilities for entertainment and recreation including public lounges, libraries, and athletic facilities such as swimming pools and gymnasiums. Most residence hotels were located in fashionable downtown neighborhoods within easy distance of stores, restaurants, theaters, and offices. All were intended for semi-permanent guests renting on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis.

With the Shelton, James T. Lee aimed for the upper end of this market, indicating that his club hotel would be “equal in appointments to the Yale Club.”¹¹ He reasoned that the greater height of the building, planned to accommodate 1,200 residents, would lower the cost of construction.”¹² Operating costs both in terms of running the physical plant and in staffing the hotel would not be much greater than for a hotel half the size. And while construction costs would be higher for the upper stories, the excellent views would make the apartments very desirable and command high rents. As with most residential hotels, the apartments were to be relatively modest in size but offset by the exceptional facilities for entertainment and dining.¹³

Harmon filed plans for the new hotel with the Department of Buildings in late May 1922.¹⁴ Construction began in August 1922. The hotel opened partially in autumn 1923 and in March 1924 the Shelton advertised that it was completed and ready to receive more residents.¹⁵ With a large number of residential hotels and club buildings just completed and others in the works, the mammoth Shelton had difficulty finding enough tenants as a bachelor apartment building and in October 1924 announced that it was opening its doors to women.¹⁶

By June 1925, when the New York State census was taken, there were many childless couples, as well as career women, and young bachelors residing in the hotel.¹⁷ The Shelton seems to have been especially popular with young artists and designers and attracted a number of people connected with the theater and movies. In 1925 they included actor Humphrey Bogart, who was starring on Broadway, and musical comedy actress, Jayne Auburn, who was appearing in a featured role with Fred and Adele Astaire in the Gershwins' *Lady Be Good!* One of the earliest tenants was the architect-theatrical designer Claude Bragdon, who moved to the Shelton by February 1924, lived there until his death in 1946, and published an extensive and glowing article on the building in *The Architectural Record* in July 1925.¹⁸

The Design¹⁹

Even while it was under construction in 1923 the Shelton was recognized as a new and innovative expression of the skyscraper. Architectural delineator Hugh Ferriss writing in the *Christian Science Monitor* praised "its arresting silhouette, its cumulative piling of mass upon mass, and the vitality which its upward strides exhibit."²⁰ Ferriss observed that the form of the building was a direct result of the recently enacted zoning law. The law's requirement that buildings after reaching a certain height must recede as they ascend had resulted in a form that recalled no definite architectural style of the past. Ferriss noted that architects had at first responded to the law by continuing to treat each section of the building independently resulting in a pileup of unrelated facades rather than one unified design. For Ferriss and the other architectural critics of the period, Harmon's great achievement at the Shelton was his creation of a truly organic and satisfying design "that accepted the law not as unfortunate limitation, but as a basis."²¹ Thus the huge masses were carefully proportioned to provide a powerful and striking profile when viewed from all directions. The recessed light courts on Lexington Avenue, East 49th Street, and at the rear of the building served both a practical purpose, bringing light to the interior, and an aesthetic one, breaking up the huge masses, creating shadows that enhanced the three-dimensional quality of the design, and providing strong verticals at the corners of the building. These effects are particularly evident on the rear (east side) of the building, where the vertical proportions of the setback wings, deep shadow-filled court, massive chimney thrusting skyward, arches, and bowed metal trusses [originally bridges] create a powerful composition that became a favorite subject for artists and photographers.

Harmon paid equal attention to the materials and details of the building. Above the two-story limestone-clad base enhanced with beautifully detailed Northern Italian-inspired ornament, the Shelton façades are clad with multi-hued grayish-brown brick and terra cotta and are organized into alternating recessed and projected bays that extend virtually unbroken from the first setback to the top of the building tying the composition together and contributing to the verticality of the design. To create a sense of stability and overcome perspectival distortion, the walls are battered (sloped slightly inward), with the batter increasing at each setback, "as in the entasis of a column."²² To prevent monotony and provide texture, projected bricks accent the walls. These are arranged in files on the projected piers reinforcing the verticality of the design and in random patterns in the recessed bays. At the 15th story, which contained dining and social rooms opening on to terraces and a roof garden, arched corbel tables beneath the parapets and double-arched windows mark the change in function "without impairing the unity of the entire design or arresting the upward sweep."²³ Arched corbel tables and chevron moldings also set off the setback above the 20th story, with the arches providing a termination for the visual upsweep of the recessed bays below. Above the 20th story, at the corners of tower, spiraling colonettes and

angled brackets carrying gargoyles enrich the building's silhouette compensating for the lack of heavy cornices. The double-height 31st story features "lofty and ornate openings," which indicated the presence of a gymnasium and squash courts.²⁴ The parapet crowning the 31st story is given a crenellated treatment with the taller elements continuing the vertical lines of the projected bays while the narrower recessed bays above the arches are capped by strapwork bands. Deeply setback, the penthouse, housing water tanks and mechanical equipment, is suggestive of a hipped-roofed chapel with arches. It reiterates the alternating recessed and projected bay articulation and crenellated roofline of the lower stories.

The decorative program for the Shelton was drawn from a wide range of sources including North Italian Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance models. Harmon indicated that he attempted to avoid the use of any pronounced style "as the masses of such modern buildings have no architectural precedence."²⁵ Claude Bragdon thought that the details of the brickwork, "though suggesting the Lombard cannot be assigned to any particular place or period;"²⁶

They are in a manner self-created, pleasing in pattern, of the proper scale, casting the right kind of shadows just where accent is needed, and withal so unassertive as not to divert the eye and mind away from that impression of mass.²⁷

Understandably, Gothic elements, with their emphasis on vertical lines and picturesque details, were also much employed. Among the most striking features were the griffin grotesques at the corners of the tower and the playful male figures with lions' heads carrying amphorae punctuating the roofline above the 31st-story setback.

Critical Reception and Influence

Writing about the Shelton in 1926, Leon V. Solon noted that "no design produced in recent years has attracted as much attention, or received more commendation."²⁸ To architecture critic Charles Downing Lay, writing on new architecture in New York in *The Arts* in 1923, it was a "really thrilling example of vertical composition" and the "outstanding feature of the upper Island" that no one could look on "from near or far without some lifting of the spirit."²⁹ The editors of *Architecture* magazine concurred in 1924, writing that the Shelton's "massive walls and soaring height make a wonderfully picturesque silhouette from the distance and, we may say, thrilling impression as you stand near it and look up at its ascending lines."³⁰ For *The New Yorker's* architectural critic, writing under the byline of "The Sky-Line" in May 1925, the Shelton was simply "the finest building in New York."³¹

Its design is beautiful Its details are simple, its lines graceful, its ornament interesting. It is a building designed for modern New York.³²

Architect and historian Robert A.M. Stern notes that the "Shelton unleashed a trend toward skyscraper apartments and hotels as intense as the passion for skyscraper offices."³³ Its influence is readily discernable in several club hotels that used a similar decorative vocabulary and massing including Murgatroyd & Ogden's Barbizon Hotel for Women at 140 East 63rd Street (1927-28, a designated New York City Landmark). Historians have also acknowledged Harmon's design as the jumping off point for the massing of a diverse group of early skyscrapers, ranging from the early studies for the Barclay-Vesey Building, 140 West Street

(McKenzie, Voorhees & Gemelin, Ralph Walker, architect in charge, 1923-27, a designated New York City Landmark), to the Standard Oil Building at 26 Broadway (Carrere & Hastings; Shreve, Lamb & Blake associate architects, 1920-28, a designated New York City Landmark), to the initial designs for the lower stories of Empire State Building.³⁴ More broadly, Harmon's use of simplified brickwork and reliance on massing and play of light and shadow to create the building's powerful silhouette was an inspiration for younger architects. As skyscraper historian Carol Willis has observed, the Shelton Hotel and the Barclay-Vesey Building, lauded by critics for monumental scale and simplified silhouettes, "helped to popularize an aesthetic of simple, sculptural mass that became the benchmark of progressive design by the mid-twenties."³⁵

Icon and Incubator

The earliest artistic depictions of the Shelton were made to illustrate articles on its architectural design. These included the sketch of the half-completed building by Hugh Ferriss that accompanied his *Christian Science Monitor* article on the building and artist-photographer Charles Sheeler's striking photograph of the massive upper stories of the Shelton published with Charles Downing Lay's article on New York skyscrapers in the summer of 1923. Ferriss returned to the Shelton in 1927 for a crayon sketch later published in his book *Metropolis of Tomorrow* that depicts the building from the southeast emphasizing its massive zigguratlike form and the spiky protuberances of its gargoyles and rear chimney. Photographer Berenice Abbott also found inspiration in these features, including a view of the rear of Shelton in her "Changing New York" exhibit of 1937.

Artist Georgia O'Keeffe began painting cityscapes in early 1925 and probably had made several paintings of the Shelton's façade before she and her husband Alfred Stieglitz moved to a two-room apartment on the hotel's 28th floor in November 1925; late in 1927 they moved to the 30th floor to a suite with views in all directions.³⁶ O'Keeffe in an interview in 1928 said that she knew it was "unusual for an artist to work way up near the roof of a big hotel in the heart of a roaring city, but I think that's just what the artist of today needs for stimulus. He has to have a place where he can behold the city as a unit before his eyes."³⁷ Soon after moving to the Shelton, O'Keeffe began to take advantage of her vantage point to create a series of detailed panoramas of the industrial neighborhoods in Queens seen from her east window and in 1929 a romantic vision of the Beverley Hotel *New York, Night* one block to the north. In all, she produced about 20 New York scenes between 1925 and 1930.

Stimulated by O'Keeffe's work, beginning in 1927, Alfred Stieglitz began photographing the views outside the windows at his galleries (The Intimate Gallery, 1925-29, An American Place, 1930-46) and from his apartment at the Shelton. Until ill-health forced him to give up photography in 1937, Stieglitz produced about 90 cityscapes, most taken at the Shelton or at An American Place. The pictures from the Shelton included famous views of RCA Building and the General Electric Building, taken at various times of day and night, and in various seasons, both from his apartment windows and from the hotel's 15th-story terraces.³⁸ For both O'Keeffe and Stieglitz, their apartment was also their studio, and while they were away from the city for long periods (O'Keeffe in New Mexico, Stieglitz in Lake George), and suffered periods of incapacity due to illness, they produced important and influential work at the Shelton, and were often identified in the popular press as living at the hotel.

At the Shelton, O'Keeffe and Stieglitz formed a close friendship with Claude Bragdon, with whom they shared an interest in Theosophy and Transcendentalism.³⁹ Another member of their circle who lived at the Shelton (c. 1925-26) was the Mexican artist, Miguel Covarrubias

(1904-57), who Bragdon profiled in the hotel's newsletter in 1925 and who was then earning his living as a caricaturist and theatrical designer.⁴⁰ English painter-author Dorothy Brett, who journeyed from Taos to New York to show her work to Stieglitz in the fall of 1928, settled at the Shelton for a brief period where she, O'Keeffe, Stieglitz, and Bragdon "formed a regular foursome at breakfast."⁴¹ Harold Clurman, then a stage manager and play reader for the Theatre Guild with an interest in visual arts who had taken to hanging out at An American Place where he had enlisted the sympathies of Stieglitz's protégé/lover Dorothy Norman, was living at Shelton in 1930 when Norman helped him raise the money to establish the Group Theater with Cheryl Crawford and Lee Strasberg.⁴² Bragdon, Covarrubias, Brett, and Clurman would remain life-long friends with Stieglitz and O'Keeffe.

The Shelton from the 1920s to the 1940s

When it opened in 1924, the Shelton's exceptional sports facilities, which included an Olympic-size swimming pool, bowling alley, squash court, and gymnasium made it a favorite venue for sports competitions. In the 1920s and 1930s it was home to a women's swimming club, the Hotel Shelton Dolphins, and hosted the AAU Women's Swimming Association meets as well as the World Open Squash Tennis Championship matches. In August 1926, the Shelton was the site of a spectacular stunt by the magician Harry Houdini who set a world record by remaining sealed in an airtight casket at the bottom of the hotel's pool for one hour and 31 minutes.⁴³ His feat attracted a vast amount of press attention and was recreated in the Shelton's pool in February 1956 by the Canadian magician "The Amazing Randi," who managed to best Houdini's record by two minutes.

The Shelton Hotel changed hands in 1935 and was placed under the control of the Knott Management Corporation.⁴⁴ In October 1935 Knott announced plans to remodel the lounges on the 49th Street side of the first floor for use as a night club creating entrances from 49th Street and Lexington Avenue. A new entrance was also added to the main dining room on 48th Street.

In the early 1940s advertisements for the Shelton extolled the convenience of its Grand Central location, the access to special features such as the swimming pool, solarium, gymnasium, and library, the reasonably priced meals available in its main dining room, and supper dancing to well-known bands in the hotel's Shelton Corner night club-cafe. By that point rooms were being rented on a long-term, weekly, or nightly basis. Like many hotels, the Shelton also hosted catered events and civic group functions.⁴⁵ Notable residents in the 1940s included author Tennessee Williams who stayed at the hotel from August to November 1945 while he had a new play in rehearsal and *The Glass Menagerie* was the biggest hit on Broadway. Mitchell Kennerley, publisher, gallerist, and bibliophile, resided at the Shelton from 1948 until his death in 1950.⁴⁶

Later History

In 1946, the Knott Corporation, which had been managing the Shelton since 1935, purchased the hotel.⁴⁷ Knott converted some of the 15th-story public spaces to offices and was highly successful in leasing the hotel's meeting and dining rooms to trade groups for business meetings. Among the early commercial tenants were wedding planner Calla Caroe; the Public Relations Society of America, publishers of the Public Relations Journal; and Commercial Illustrators of America, a commercial photography firm. In 1949 the Shelton became the first hotel in the country to offer television free of charge to all its guests. The Knott Corporation sold the Shelton in 1951, after which it then changed hands several times, before being acquired by

the Fink Hotel Group in 1954. By that point that hotel's basement swimming pool, health club, and gymnasium were being operated by former Olympian and motion picture star Buster Crabbe and three floors containing about 180 rooms were being leased as business offices. The Fink brothers announced their plans for a series of interior upgrades and renovations, which included converting more hotel rooms into offices and studios.⁴⁸ In 1957, the Finks leased the hotel to a group of investors who immediately granted a sublease on the property.⁴⁹ The sub-lessees hoped to turn a quick profit by refurbishing the hotel and selling the lease to a hotel chain. When the project proved to be more expensive and time-consuming than anticipated, lawyer and former Westchester County judge Victor Brenner and International Longshoremen's Association president William V. Bradley's use of forged securities to finance the project was exposed, resulting in jail terms for both.⁵⁰

The hotel continued to operate through the 1960s but was increasingly regarded as passé. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Shelton "was acquired by Goldman and DiLorenzo and its leasehold transferred to Tishman, Arlen Realty and Stanley Stahl, who assembled the rest of the block with the intention of demolishing everything and building a massive new structure for a corporate client."⁵¹ By the mid-1970s the hotel had been emptied except for a few rent-controlled tenants who resisted eviction. With the office market collapsing in the face of a brutal recession, the Tishman organization sold the Third Avenue portion of the block and Goldman and DiLorenzo regained control of the Shelton, only to lose it to foreclosure. After foreclosing the Dollar Bank put the Shelton up for sale. In 1977, the bank put together a consortium headed by developer Edward J. (Biff) Halloran and hotelier Norman Groh who obtained a franchise and loan from the Howard Johnson Corporation to operate what was to be known as the Halloran House Hotel. Architect Stephen B. Jacobs began restoring the exterior of the building and undertook a gut renovation of the interior to bring the hotel rooms up to modern standards. Jacobs' exterior alterations included a careful reconstruction of the portions of the first story pavilions on the Lexington Avenue façade and the westernmost bay of the 49th Street façade that had been altered in the 1930s and later modified.⁵² The Halloran House opened for business just after Thanksgiving in 1978.⁵³ It developed a special niche as a headquarters for political campaigns, including Ted Kennedy's campaign to unseat Jimmy Carter in 1980 and Mario Cuomo's run for governor of 1982.⁵⁴

In 1981 and 1982 several governmental agencies and newspapers began investigating allegations of bid rigging and corruption in the concrete business in Manhattan where Edward J. Halloran's Transit Mix Company enjoyed a near monopoly.⁵⁵ By 1984, with the evidence mounting against him, Halloran sold the hotel to the 525 Lexington Avenue Associates, Morris Bailey principal.⁵⁶ The new owners continued the relationship with the Howard Johnson Corporation and continued to operate under the Halloran House name. In 1988-89, with hotel occupancy rising throughout the city, 525 Lexington Avenue Associates undertook a major upgrade of the hotel, which included installing through-the-wall air conditioners and replacing most of the windows throughout the building.⁵⁷

The Howard Johnson Company had been acquired by the Marriott Corporation in 1985 and with the multi-million dollar renovation complete in December 1990 the hotel was placed under Marriott management and renamed the Marriott East Side Hotel.⁵⁸ Just as the changeover was occurring in November 1990, Rabbi Meir Kahane, the founder of the Jewish Defense League, was assassinated in a second floor lecture hall at the hotel. The shooter, El Sayyid Nosair, was apprehended and sentenced to a 22-year prison term. In 1993, after the World Trade Center bombing, it was revealed that Nosair had been part of the terrorist cell headed by Sheik

Omar Abdul-Rahman. Later it was learned that two other members of the cell had accompanied Nosair to the hotel, one of whom, Mohammed A. Salameh, was later involved in the 1993 bombing.⁵⁹

In 1994, 525 Lexington Avenue Associates was reorganized under Chapter 11, and the Host Marriott Corporation bought the Marriott East Side building with Morris Bailey.⁶⁰ It subsequently passed through the ownership of several corporations before being acquired by the Ashkenazy Acquisitions Corporation in 2015.

In the 1990s and 2000s the hotel's facades continued to be altered, repaired, and restored. The work included the replacement of failing steel spandrels over window openings, the installation of the present metal and glass marquee at the entrance loggia in 2000, reconstruction of parapets, repair and in some cases replacement of failing stonework, and brick repair. Unfortunately, it was not always possible to match the original multi-hued brick, resulting in visible areas of patching. However, considerable care was taken to retain existing decorative brickwork and to store and reuse stone coping and decorative elements. While most of the terra cotta was in good condition and required only minor repairs all of the griffins had to be replaced. Today the Shelton Hotel is remarkably intact; it retains its iconic form and most of its ornament and remains a potent symbol of cosmopolitan New York and its central place in the history of skyscraper design.

Report researched and written by
Gale Harris
Evolution of East Midtown by
Matthew Postal
Research Department

NOTES

¹ In its internal numbering system the Shelton skips from 12th floor to the 14th floor so that some sources refer to the 16th floor setbacks and roof-garden and 32nd floor squash courts while others speak of the 15th story and 31st story. Because this report deals with the exterior of the building, we have chosen to use a continuous numbering scheme. It should also be noted that the penthouse containing water tanks and mechanical equipment was omitted from the initial story count from the original Certificate of Occupancy but that this is now treated as a 34- or 35-story building in Department of Building filings.

² This section is mostly based on designation reports prepared by members of the research staff at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Also see Kurt C. Schlichting, *Grand Central Terminal* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 2001); Robert A.M. Stern and others, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999); Robert A.M. Stern and others, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Rizzoli Books, 1983); Robert A.M. Stern and others, *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Rizzoli Books, 1987).

³ This biography of Arthur Loomis Harmon is based on the entry for him in the LPC, *Allerton 39th Street House Designation Report* (LP-2296), prepared by Theresa Noonan (New York: City of New York, 2008), 5-6; Karen Arnold, Warburton House, Philadelphia County, PA Inventory/Nomination Form, (York PA: Historic York, Inc., 2002), sec. 8, p. 7; John Tauranac, *Empire State Building: The Making of a Landmark* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 102-03, 108-10; "Arthur Harmon, Architect, Dead," *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1958, 21.

⁴ "Will Raise Level of Boxing Bouts: International Sporting Club," *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1919, S3.

Ibid.

⁶ John Kiernan, "Sports of the Times: Forgotten Work of Great Sculptor," *New York Times*, Mar. 10, 1941, 22.

⁷ "I.S.C. Site Goes on Block Today," *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1922, 22; "International Sporting Club Buyer," *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1922, 104.

⁸ "31 Story Hotel for Sporting Club Site," *New York Herald*, Mar. 28, 1922; "Big Hotel for Old I.S.C. Property," *Evening Mail*, Mar. 27, 1922; "Contemplated Construction," *Record and Guide*, Mar. 25, 1922, 378; "Plans Skyscraper Hotel on Proposed Internat. S. C. Site," *New York Tribune*, Mar. 28, 1922, 19.

⁹ This discussion of apartment hotels is based on Elizabeth Cromley, *Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990), 188-202; Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of CA Press, 1994), 56-87; Landmarks Preservation Commission, (Former) *Yale Club of New York City Building (now Penn Club of New York Designation Report (LP-2379)*, prepared by Jay Shockley (New York: City of New York, 2010), 3-4; Stern, *New York 1930*, 206-208.

¹⁰ Groth, 80-81.

¹¹ "Expansion of Trade on Lexington Avenue," *New York Times*, Mar. 11, 1923, RE A2.

¹² "The Shelton: Arthur Loomis Harmon, Architect" *Architecture*, 49 (Apr. 1924), 103.

¹³ These included restaurants and lounges, the terrace gardens and sunroom, a Turkish bath and barber shop, bowling alley, gymnasium, swimming pool, and squash courts.

¹⁴ New York City Department of Buildings, New Building Docket, 291-1922; "Contemplated Construction," *Record and Guide*, May 27, 1922, 664; "Work in Progress on World's Tallest Hotel for Bachelors," *Record and Guide*, June 10, 1922, 713; "Thirty-Story Hotel for Lexington Avenue," *New York Times*, May 5, 1922, 35; "Plans for Big Hotel Filed," *New York Times*, May 16, 1922, 39; "Thirty-Story Bachelor Hotel," *New York Times*, June 11, 1922, 106; E. J. Williamson, "New Hotels of 1923," *American Builder*, 39 (Feb. 1, 1924), 112.

¹⁵ "The Shelton: A Residence for Men," *New York Tribune/Herald Tribune*, Mar. 9, 1924, E4.

¹⁶ "Hotel for the Bachelor Opens Its Doors to Women," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1924, X 11; "New York's Most Beautiful Residence Hotel Has Thrown Open Its Doors to Women," *New York Tribune/Herald Tribune*, Sept. 24, 1924, 19.

¹⁷ New York State Census, 1925, New York, New York, Election District 45, Assembly District 12, p. 4-13.

¹⁸ In his autobiography Bragdon wrote that he moved to the Shelton in February 1924; his biographer indicates that it was "near the end of 1923." See Jonathan Massey, *Crystal and Arabesque: Claude Bragdon, Ornament and Modern Architecture* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 265-66; Claude Bragdon, *More Lives Than One* (New York: Knopf, 1938), 102; Claude Bragdon, "The Shelton Hotel, New York," *Architectural Record* 58 (July 1925), 1-18.

¹⁹ This section on the Shelton design is based on Bragdon, "The Shelton," 1-18; Stern, *New York 1930*, 208-12; "The Shelton: Arthur Loomis Harmon, Architect," *Architecture*, 49 (Apr. 1924), 101-108; "Editorial and Other Comments: A Fine Achievement," *Architecture*, 49 (Apr. 1924), 111-112; Edward Warren Hoak and Willis Humphrey Church, *Masterpieces of American Architecture* (1930, reprint, New York: Dover Books, 2002).

²⁰ Hugh Ferriss, "A New Type of Building," *Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 27, 1923, 7.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Hoak and Willis.

²³ Bragdon, "The Shelton," 3.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "The Shelton," *Architecture*, 108.

²⁶ Bragdon, 8.

²⁷ Ibid, 8-9.

²⁸ Leon V. Solon, "The Evolution of an Architectural Design: The Shelton Hotel," *Architectural Record* 59 (Apr. 1926), 367.

²⁹ Charles Downing Lay, "New Architecture in New York," *The Arts* 4 (Aug. 1923), 68.

³⁰ "Editorial and Other Comments: A Fine Achievement," 111.

³¹ "The Sky-Line," *The New Yorker*, May 2, 1925, 28.

³² Ibid.

³³ Stern, *New York 1930*, 212.

³⁴ Arnold Lehman, "The New York Skyscraper: A History of Its Development," (Ph. D. Dissertation: Yale University, 1974), 264-65, 277.

³⁵ Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), 77-79. See also Keith D. Revell, "Law Makes Order," in Roberta Moudry, editor, *The American Skyscraper: Cultural Histories* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 50-51.

³⁶ This information on Georgia O'Keeffe's and Alfred Stieglitz's residence and art at the Shelton is based on Anna C. Chave, "'Who Will Paint New York?': 'the World's New Art Center' and the Skyscraper Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe," *American Art* 5, n. 1/2 (Winter-Spring, 1991), 86-107; Joel Smith, "How Stieglitz Came to Photograph Cityscapes," *History of Photography* 20, n. 4 (Winter 1996); Mary Woods, *Beyond the Architect's Eye: Photographs and the American Built Environment* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 52-80; Merrill Schleier, *The Skyscraper in American Art, 1890-1931* (Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1986); Jack Cowart, Juan Hamilton, Sarah Greenough, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1988); Celeste Connor, *Democratic Visions: Art and Theory in the Stieglitz Circle, 1924-1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 149-167.

³⁷ Interview with B. Vladimir Berman, *New York Evening Graphic*, May 1928, quoted in Woods, 80.

³⁸ These include *From the Shelton: Lower Part of the G.E. Building*, c. 1932, taken from the hotel roof garden. See Connor, 159.

³⁹ Historians have argued for the influence of Theosophical ideas in the work of Stieglitz and O'Keeffe and many of the artists and writers connected to their circle; Bragdon was one of the leaders of the Theosophist movement in this country. See Massey, *Crystal and Arabesque*, passim; Kristina Wilson, "The Intimate Gallery and the *Equivalents*: Spirituality in the 1920s Work of Stieglitz," *Art Bulletin* 85, n. 4 (Dec. 2003), 746-68.

⁴⁰ *Miguel Covarrubias: Drawing a Cosmopolitan Line* (Georgia O'Keeffe Museum) edited by Carolyn Kastner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014); Jonathan Massey, posting, May 27, 1999, "H-Net Discussion Network – Miguel Covarrubias (Stowe Illustrator) (4 replies) @ <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl> accessed May 9, 2016; "Miguel Covarrubias," *Wikipedia*, updated Apr. 5, 2016, @ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_Covarrubias, accessed May 9, 2016.

⁴¹ Massey, *Crystal and Arabesque*, 265.

⁴² United States Census, 1930, New York, New York, E.D. 31-633, S.D. 23, 18B; "No Place for Normal, New York: Dorothy Norman and Alfred Stieglitz," posted Oct. 5, 2014 @ <http://cbrowder.blogspot.com/2014/10/147-dorothy-norman-and-alfred-stieglitz.html>, accessed June 21, 2016; "Harold Clurman," *Wikipedia*, updated June 8, 2016, @ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Clurman, accessed June 21, 2016.

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- ⁴⁹ "Group Buys Lease on Shelton Hotel," *New York Times*, June 22, 1957, 26.
- ⁵⁰ Merrill Folsom, "Mystery Shrouds Bank Fraud Case," *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1959, 1; Milton Estrow, "Secretary Balks in Fraud Inquiry," *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1959, 21; Milton Estrow, "Ex-Convict Held in Swindle Case," *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1959, 39; Stanley Levey, "Suit Says Bradley Profited from Forged I.L.A. Notes," *New York Times*, Jun. 11, 1959, 1; Adam F. Long, "Brenner Guilty Plea Halts Fraud Trial," *New York Times*, Jan. 14, 1960, 1.
- ⁵¹ Ada Louise Huxtable, "A Dramatic Example of Architectural Recycling," *New York Times*, Jul. 3, 1977, 61.
- ⁵² Carter B. Horsley, "Interest in Hotel Projects Stirs As Luxury Market Booms," *New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1977, R1. See also Carter B. Horsley, "In Environs of Grand Central, New Strength," *New York Times*, Apr. 30, 1978, R1.
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- ⁵⁴ Frank Lynn, Cuomo Enters Gubernatorial Race Against Koch: Cuomo Enters the Race for New York Governor," *New York Times*, Mar. 17, 1982, A1.
- ⁵⁵ Selwyn Raab, "Irregularities in Concrete Industry Inflate Building Costs, Experts Say," *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1982, A1; Selwyn Raab, "Monopoly Is Seen in Concrete Sales," *New York Times*, June 14, 1984, A1; Marcia Chambers, "2 Face Charges In a Bank Theft of \$23 Million: Top Concrete Executives Are Accused of Fraud," *New York Times*, June 28, 1985, B3; Selwyn Raab, "Ex-Hotel Owner With Former Ties to Mobsters Disappears," *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1998, B5.
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- ⁵⁹ John T. McQuiston, "Kahane is Killed After Giving Talk in New York Hotel," *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1990, A1; Robert McFadden, "The Scene: A Smile, Two Shots," *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1990, A1; "Assassination of Meir Kahane," *Wikipedia*, updated Nov. 6, 2015, @ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_Meir_Kahane; "El Sayyid Nosair," *Wikipedia*, updated Nov. 6, 2015, @ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Sayid_Nosair, accessed June 28, 2016.
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FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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

The Commission further finds that the Shelton Hotel, designed by architect Arthur Loomis Harmon and completed in 1923, was an icon of 1920s New York and played a major role in the development of skyscraper; that it was one of the first “skyscraper” residential hotels and was one of the premiere hotels constructed along the noted “hotel alley” stretch of Lexington Avenue, which was built as part of the redevelopment of this section of East Midtown following the opening of Grand Central Terminal and the Lexington Avenue subway line; that even while it was under construction the Shelton Hotel was recognized as the first successful embodiment of the massing requirements of the 1916 Zoning Law, notable for its soaring expression of height, powerful simple massing, striking silhouette, and exceptional handling of materials and details; that the 31-story-plus-penthouse building is designed in the Lombard Revival style incorporating medieval and Renaissance details; that above a beautifully detailed limestone base, its facades are clad with multi-hued greyish-brown brick and terra cotta and step up in three setbacks to a central tower, and a picturesque hipped-roofed penthouse; that alternating flush and recessed bays topped with corbelled friezes emphasize the structure’s verticality; that Harmon battered the building’s walls, increasing the incline at each setback to counter natural perspectival distortions, relieved the repetition of hotel rooms windows with recessed vertical panels that fostered shadows and contributed to the building’s three-dimensionality, and suppressed horizontal lines to emphasize the structure’s verticality; that while the building is nominally Lombard Revival in style, Harmon deliberately avoided relying on any particular period for his details since he believed that “the masses of such modern buildings have no architectural precedence;” that at the time it was built, the Shelton was considered the tallest hotel in the world at 31 stories; that articles lauding its design appeared in all of the major architectural journals and the popular press and it received awards from the Architectural League of New York and the American Institute of Architects; that the Shelton inspired the design of numerous hotels and apartment houses in New York and throughout the country; that it was an important precedent for future setback skyscrapers its monumental scale and simplified silhouettes helping to popularize, what skyscraper historian Carol Willis describes as “the aesthetic of simple, sculptural mass that became the benchmark of progressive design by the mid-twenties;” that the Shelton became a symbol of modern New York and was the frequent subject of paintings and photographs during the 1920s and 1930s; that originally built as a men’s residence with 1,200 bedrooms plus library, lounge, and athletic facilities, the hotel opened its doors to women in 1924 and became a popular residence for theater people, including actor Humphrey Bogart, Group Theatre founder Harold Clurman, and playwright Tennessee Williams, and artists, most notably Georgia O’Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz who lived at Shelton from 1925 to 1936 and created important and influential work there; that currently the New York Marriott East Side, the Shelton Hotel is remarkably intact and retains its iconic form and most of its original Lombard Revival ornament.

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 Shelton Hotel, 525 Lexington Avenue (aka 523-527 Lexington Avenue, 137-139 East 48th Street, 136-140 East 49th

Street), Manhattan, and designates as its Landmark Site Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1303, Lot 53.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Diana Chapin, Wellington Chen, Michael Devonshire, Michael Goldblum, John Gustafsson, Adi Shamir-Baron, Kim Vauss, Commissioners



Shelton Hotel
525 Lexington Avenue
(aka 523-525 Lexington Avenue, 137-139 East 48th Street, 136-140 East 49th Street)
Manhattan Block 1303, Lot 53
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, May 2013



View from the northwest
Photo: Sarah Moses, June 2016



Upper stories East 48th Street façade

Photo: Gale Harris, May 2016



Lexington Avenue base
Photo: Sarah Moses, November 2016



Lexington Avenue entrance loggia
Photos: Sarah Moses, June 2016



East 49th Street base
Photos: Sarah Moses, June 2016



Detail, East 49th Street base
Photo: Sarah Moses, June 2016



Detail, window surround East 48th Street base

Photo: Gale Harris, May 2016



Detail, Window lintel Lexington Avenue loggia

Photo: Sarah Moses, June 2016



Upper stories Lexington Avenue showing battered wall treatment

Photo: Sara Moses, June 2016



Detail upper stories

Photo: Sara Moses, June 2016



Roof garden pavilion East 48th Street wing
Photo: Gale Harris, May 2016



Tower from the southwest, c. 1975
Photo: LPC Images File



Decorative detailing upper stories east facade

Photo: Marianne Percival, November 2016

