

Past & Future of the Penn District



DEFINITELY TO BE DEMOLISHED

Photos courtesy of David Holowka, Save Chelsea



7 Penn Plaza

370 7th Avenue (Sommerfeld & Steckler)



370 7th Avenue was designed c. 1920 by Sommerfeld & Steckler which was a prominent designer of store and loft structures which accommodated the growing industry of garment companies and furriers around Penn Station. 370 7th Avenue has been declared as National Register of Historic Places-eligible.

St. John the Baptist Church

211 West 30th Street (Napoleon LeBrun & Sons)



211 West 30th Street was designed c. 1872 by Napoleon Le Brun with a tower later added in 1891 to a design by William C. Schickel. LeBrun designed the Metropolitan Life Tower at Madison Square Park and nearly every firehouse commissioned by the FDNY in the late 19th century. The church complex is both National Register and NYC landmark-eligible.

Fairmont Building

239 West 30th Street (Joseph C. Schaeffler - attr.)



241 West 30th Street was likely designed c. 1923 by Joseph C. Schaeffler for J.M. Heatherton. The building housed the offices of Heatherton's publications as well as various furriers in its early years. The building was declared as National Register-eligible in Dec. 2018.

Penn Station Service Building

242 West 31st Street (McKim, Mead & White)



242 West 31st Street was designed c. 1908 by McKim, Mead & White with Westinghouse, Church, Kerr & Co. for the Pennsylvania, N.Y. & L.I.R.R. Company to house virtually all of the critical powering services to the original Pennsylvania Station, including electricity, heat, light, elevator hydraulics, compressed air, and refrigeration. The service building is the largest remnant still standing from the original station. The building has been declared as eligible for both the National Register of Historic Places and New York City landmark status.

Penn Station Service Building

242 West 31st Street (McKim, Mead & White)



The building spans eight bays, separated by nearly-flat Roman Doric pilasters at the first three floors. The windows on the first floor are covered by projected iron grilles, a favorite feature of the McKim firm.

The Stewart Hotel

371 7th Avenue (Murgatroyd & Ogden/Geo. B. Post)



371 7th Avenue was designed by Murgatroyd & Ogden with George B. Post & Sons as the 31-story Governor Clinton Hotel for the Canabbe Holding Corp. An underground tunnel was built to connect the hotel with the train station and subway. It is eligible for both the National Register of Historic Places and New York City landmark status.

The Stewart Hotel

371 7th Avenue (Murgatroyd & Ogden/Geo. B. Post)



The striking design of Romanesque and Northern Italianate styles features double-height arcades and setbacks with crenelated cornices on the upper floors.

Hotel Pennsylvania

401 7th Avenue (McKim, Mead & White)



401 7th Avenue was designed c. 1910 by the preeminent firm of McKim, Mead & White for the Pennsylvania Terminal Real Estate Company. It was planned to aesthetically and urbanistically complement the nearby General Post Office and Pennsylvania Station by McKim. When built, it was the largest hotel in the world with 2,200 rooms. Its grand ballroom was a big-band hotspot for great performers of the day like Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Glenn Miller. The hotel was made famous by the song "Pennsylvania 6-5000," a phone number that still rang at the hotel's switchboard. The hotel has been declared as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Gimbels Department Store

100 West 33rd Street (D.H. Burnham & Co.)



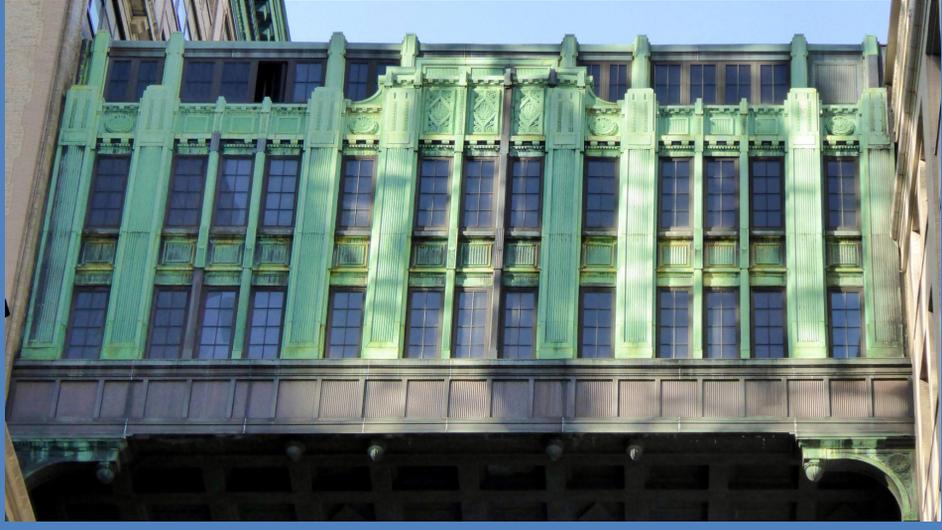
100 West 33rd Street was designed c. 1910 by Daniel H. Burnham and built by Thompson-Starrett for the Manhattan Hudson Realty Co. The 10-story building served as the flagship for the Gimbel Brothers department store. It is one of the few sites in New York City by Burnham which include the iconic Flatiron Building. Conveniently being absent in the DEIS for the project, no impact at all was deliberated or assessed for the public to review. While a 1980's alteration by Rothside Kaiserman & Bee obscured the exterior, it is still possible to bring back the original grandeur.

Ironically, the Manhattan Mall

Burnham was the father of the City Beautiful movement

Gimbels Skybridge

32nd Street (Shreve & Lamb)



The ornate, 3-story Art Deco skybridge on 32nd Street was designed by Shreve & Lamb who would later go on to design the Empire State Building down the street. This bridge connected the store with their administrative offices across the street. Conveniently being also absent in the DEIS for the project, it was later found to be National Register-eligible.

Gimbels Skybridge

33rd Street (Shreve & Lamb)



The notion of skybridge harkens back to what was idealized as the future of look of New York when it was envisioning a metropolis of interconnected walkways.

INDIRECTLY THREATENED



While these buildings are not scheduled for demolition at this time, one could likely be assured that they are under threat from the ensuing impacts of having this neighborhood changed. They are nonetheless remarkable examples of some of the great American architects.

II Penn Plaza

393 7th Avenue (Starrett & van Vleck)



393 7th Avenue was designed in 1922 by Starrett & Van Vleck for the Equitable Life Assurance Company. The firm of Starrett & van Vleck was known for their designs of the flagship department stores for Saks Fifth Avenue and Lord & Taylor. 393 7th Avenue declared eligible for both the National Register of Historic Places and New York City landmark status.

Arsenal Building

463 7th Avenue (Buchman & Kahn)



463 7th Avenue was designed c. 1924 by Buchman & Kahn on the site of the former New York State Arsenal. It was reportedly one of the first designs of Ely Jacques Kahn's career. The ornate exterior was ornamented with sumptuous terra cotta fabricated by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co. It is listed on the National Register and is New York City landmark-eligible.

Arsenal Building

463 7th Avenue (Buchman & Kahn)



Intricate abstract foliate patterns decorate the capitals of the piers at the top of the 3rd floor.

Citibank

201 West 34th Street (Walker & Gillette)



201 West 34th Street was designed c. 1929 by Walker & Gillette for the National City Bank of New York. At this time, it was the largest commercial bank in the world. The building is listed on the National Register and is presumably eligible for New York City landmarking.

Citibank

201 West 34th Street (Walker & Gillette)



Present on the south wall is the bank's signature eagle symbol which was used on the exterior of their branches.

Nelson Tower

450 7th Avenue (H. Craig Severance)



450 7th Avenue was designed c. 1929 by H. Craig Severance for Julius Nelson, a builder and executive in the dress manufacturing sector. At the time, it was the largest building in the vast Garment District. It is both eligible for National Register and New York City landmark status.

J.C. Penney Co. Building

330 West 34th Street (Schultze & Weaver)



330 West 34th Street was designed c. 1926 by Schultze & Weaver for the J.C. Penney Company as an office and warehouse building. The architect, Schultze & Weaver, was responsible for many of New York's greatest hotels like the Waldorf-Astoria, Sherry-Netherland, and Pierre hotel. 330 West 34th Street is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

New Yorker Hotel

481 8th Avenue (Sugarman & Berger)



481 8th Avenue was designed c. 1929 by Sugarman & Berger for Mack Kanner who was a developer. At the time of build, the New Yorker was the largest hotel in Manhattan. It is eligible for both the National Register of Historic Places and New York City landmark status.

The Sloane Apartments

360 West 34th Street (Cross & Cross)



360 West 34th Street was designed c. 1930 by Cross & Cross as the William J. Sloan YMCA. It was named for Sloan who was the chairman of the National War Council of the YMCA during World War I. The building was intended to provide social facilities and accommodations for men in the armed services. It is eligible for both the National Register of Historic Places and New York City landmark status.

Adaptive Reuse



One concept that cannot be overstated is the beauty and value of adaptive reuse when a building is converted from its original intended use to a new one. This can be done on really any building and any style with a bit of ingenuity. It could become really anything from retail to apartments to educational or religious use with the added benefit of history to set the development apart from all the others. If one wants to revitalize the Penn Station area into one that is hip and unique, what better way to do it than to make locations that draw interest and wonder from the public.

Store to Offices



Vornado Realty knows the concept of reusing retail to office buildings at 770 Broadway which was originally part of the Wannamaker Department Store.

Hotel to Student Housing



The former St. George Hotel in Brooklyn was converted to a dormitory. Given the meteoric rise in popularity of schools like NYU which had to rent out space in the Stewart Hotel in 2015, there is great demand for student residence halls. The creation of housing for FIT, NYU, New School, and CUNY would be fitting.

Hotel to Senior Housing



Literally one block over is the former Leverich Towers Hotel, now Watermark at Brooklyn Heights which is a luxurious retirement community.

Hotel to Offices



The 1891 Holland House Hotel in NoMad now serves as unique office space.

Offices to School



Avenues: The World School in Chelsea is housed in a former warehouse of R.C. Williams, a wholesale grocery company.

Store to School



CUNY Graduate Center on 34th Street is housed in the massive former B. Altman & Co. flagship store.

Industrial to Commercial



The former Station A Post Office by Thomas W. Lamb is now the SoHo flagship for Apple. Cutting-edge retailers like Apple are increasingly looking to reuse old structures; they have also converted the DC Carnegie Library, Tower Theatre in California, and a former bank on Madison Avenue into beautiful stores.

Industrial to Commercial



On West 53rd Street, the famed Avatar Studios—which recorded over 400 gold and platinum records from artists like Bruce Springsteen, Madonna, Paul McCartney, and the Rolling Stones—was housed in a former 1927 powerhouse for Consolidated Edison. It is now used as the New York campus of the Berklee College of Music.

Industrial to Residential



39 Jane Street in the West Village was completed in 1924 as an electrical substation for the Edison Illuminating Co. It was converted as apartments in 1966. Likewise, the Brant Foundation Center was converted from a substation.

Religious to Institutional



Thinking of St. John the Baptist, it also has possible new uses: The Atlantic Theater occupies the parish house of St. Peter's Church in Chelsea, while the Children's Museum of Manhattan will be relocating in the coming months into the First Church of Christ, Scientist on Central Park West.

Religious to Commercial



One can also look to John's Pizzeria of Times Square or the beautiful conversion of the former Second Presbyterian Church in Newark which is a beloved office space. It was able to attract tenants like Audible which want unique environments for their employees. What if that uniqueness wasn't fancy furniture or decor but actually using the environment in a new way?

Retail to Institutional



The Rubin Museum of Art is housed in the former flagship of the Barneys New York department store in Chelsea.

Retail to Institutional



Speaking of Barneys, their uptown flagship is being converted into an art hub for galleries by TEFAF, the organizers of the world's leading art fair.

Concept



With the closure of The Pennsy, one other option for the service building would be a food hall like what is coming to 296 Canal Street which was a bank. These are just a handful of productive, unique options for these remarkable buildings.



Thank you!

I hope that this will inspire you all to be ever-better stewards of the many treasures among which we live. Thank you.