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Landmarks Preservation Commission
June 7, 1988; Designation List 204
LP-1633

MANUFACTURERS HANOVER TRUST COMPANY BUILDING, 77-79 Eighth Avenue, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1907; architects De Lemos & Cordes, with Rudolph L. Daus, successor.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 629, Lot 35.

On September 15, 1987, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 9). The hearing was continued to December 1, 1987 (Item No. 1). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Ten witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The owner did not speak at the hearing but submitted a statement in opposition to designation. The Commission has received fourteen letters in favor of designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

In the wake of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 which spawned the Academic Classical movement throughout America, the neo-classical style virtually became a formula solution for bank design. Constructed in 1907 for the New York County National Bank, (founded 1855), this bank building is an exceptionally fine and well-conceived example of its type. The overall design, although small in scale, employs the monumental classical type in a unified and structurally expressive manner, superimposing two classical architectural systems, a trabeated and an arcuated order. Enhancing the well-proportioned composition is especially handsome and thematically appropriate stone carving, which incorporates Beaux-Arts ornamental motifs, classical symbols and naturalistic elements. The architects were De Lemos & Cordes, responsible for some of New York's largest and most impressive retail stores, as well as residential and commercial buildings, in conjunction with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts trained Rudolph L. Daus (as successor), one of Brooklyn's foremost architects who designed several public and institutional buildings in that borough. The bank occupies a prominent corner site at the axis of two major thoroughfares. Paired with its counterpart, the New York Bank for Savings located across 14th Street, the two banks form a striking, classical ensemble reflective of sensitive, civic-minded urbanism, symbolically linking the neighborhoods of Greenwich Village and Chelsea.

The Crossroads

Fourteenth Street and Eighth Avenue has been a busy crossroads since the area began to grow in the mid-nineteenth century. Serving as the northern boundary of Greenwich Village and the southern boundary of Chelsea, the neighborhood surrounding this intersection attracted a mix of residential and commercial development, particularly when the railroads constructed along the west side in the 1850's made the area more accessible. In 1851, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt opened the Hudson

River Railroad, which was followed one year later by the Eighth Avenue Railroad, running between Chambers and 51st Streets. The Ninth Avenue Elevated railway, which was the first rapid transit system in New York, began operation in 1871. Later, the Eighth Avenue Independent Subway system was constructed underneath what had become the "Main Street" of the district.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, light industry flourished in this section: lumber and brickyards, warehouses, food processing and meat packing. Brick tenement houses rose in the 14th Street area in response to the need to accommodate the workers employed nearby. While Greenwich Village was already well established, Chelsea became a neighborhood of recently arrived immigrants, including the Irish, Spanish, and Greeks. During and following the Civil War, the fashionable residential and retail center of the city moved northward to Union Square; 14th Street, both east and west, became a significant commercial thoroughfare.¹

Although 14th Street and Eighth Avenue was not at the heart of the commercial boom which occurred between Union Square and Sixth Avenue, (in what came to be known as the Ladies' Mile area), banks at this location proved a convenient service for local residents and businesses. The New York County National Bank, (a predecessor to the current Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company), was founded in 1855. The bank occupied the southwest corner of the Fourteenth Street and Eighth Avenue intersection, the location at which the present building was erected in 1907. In 1896-97, the New York Bank for Savings (now Goldome), had built its new quarters, designed by R. H. Robertson, sited on the northwest corner of 14th Street and Eighth Avenue.² The New York County National Bank, erected roughly ten years later, formed a classical ensemble with its counterpart, giving this major axis its special prominence. Viewed from the east on 14th Street, or from the south, where Greenwich Avenue meets Jackson Square, the two structures create a symbolic link between the two adjoining neighborhoods, Greenwich Village and Chelsea.

Banks and Architectural Imagery

As industry, business, and commerce prospered after the Civil War, New York became the nation's financial capital. Apart from a few imposing buildings on Wall Street, however, banks were for the most part located in converted residences, or in office buildings, but prior to the 1880's and 1890's, rarely in quarters designed for them. Property values being so high in the financial district, many commercial banks began to build office buildings, conducting business on the ground floors and renting revenue producing office space above. Savings banks, many of which catered to small private investors, were, in contrast, generally not located in the Wall Street area; therefore, taking advantage of less expensive real estate, they were able to build monumental bank buildings for their exclusive use, many on corner sites.³ In the 1890's, many savings banks, "suffering, as it were, from the possession of too much cash,"⁴ commissioned new buildings. Among them were the Greenwich Savings Bank at 16th Street and Sixth Avenue, designed by Robert W. Gibson (1892, demolished); the Bank for Savings at 22nd Street and Fourth Avenue, designed by Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz (1892); the sumptuous Bowery Savings Bank, designed by McKim, Mead & White (1894, a designated New York City Landmark); and Robertson's New

York Bank for Savings.

By the turn of the century, private and incorporated banks had begun to follow the trend set by savings banks. Owners of office buildings, in an effort to maintain high rents by ensuring light and air for their tenants, often bought adjacent lots in order to limit their development to low-scale buildings, such as banks. As one critic wrote in 1903, "the tendency toward erection of 'skyscrapers' has been checked by the very conditions which these tall buildings have helped to create."⁵ Amidst so many tall and anonymous offices, banks could also benefit from the symbolic impact of occupying their own monumental buildings. This elegant, low-scale type not only projected an image of wealth and financial security, but also evoked the trustworthiness and civic responsibility expected from public institutions.⁶

In 1909, the Architectural Record published a lengthy, illustrated survey entitled, "Recent Bank Buildings of the United States," in which the author invoked the ancient Greek and Roman temples--which also served as banks--as ancestors to the modern type; the recent banks, however, had evolved, due to "the marvelous growth of modern consumerism."⁷ The illustrations attest to the pervasiveness of the classical bank type, about which the author states, "The effect of the structure must be one of great importance and simplicity. It must make on the depositors the impression of being a perfectly safe place to leave their money and valuables."⁸

This bank imagery developed, not only as a result of economic conditions, but also in response to the resurgence of the neo-classical style, what has been termed Academic Classicism. American architects, influenced by the principles of the French Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the popularity of the "Great White City"--the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago--turned to the interpretation of Renaissance and neo-Classical prototypes. In part, Academic Classicism and the Beaux-Arts style were popularized as a means to create an architecture characterized by order, clarity, and sobriety, qualities considered appropriate to the democratic ideals of the expanding nation, and particularly appropriate for the design of banks and public institutions. In making historical associations, American architects drew parallels between their own culture, the American neo-Classical past, and the enlightened Greco-Roman and Renaissance civilizations.⁹ The "American Renaissance" not only fostered a boom in public buildings, but also the City Beautiful Movement, emphasizing civic improvement and beautification through the creation of formal, public spaces and classical, axial planning. Art commissions and many professional organizations grew out of these concerns.¹⁰

The leading practitioner of Academic Classicism was the firm of McKim, Mead & White, instrumental in popularizing the classical bank type. In addition to the Bowery Savings Bank, the firm also designed the Knickerbocker Trust Company, at Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, in 1902-04. It was highly praised by Montgomery Schuyler as "a modern classic," a single institution designed "only for its own use."¹¹ Featuring a colossal columnar order filled in with a screen wall of glass and iron, Knickerbocker Trust became an influential model. William Jordy comments that "Renaissance forms provided the norm for the period....The planar surfaces of these styles, their rhythms, and their reticulated character accorded well with the boxy massing and skeletal framing of commercial and

institutional buildings.¹² Schuyler's acclaim for Knickerbocker Trust highlighted its "true method of classical construction," in which the order functions as the structure, (containing the load-bearing piers), while the glass wall is a screen.¹³

Construction and Design

The New York County National Bank had already occupied its prominent corner site at 79 Eighth Avenue since 1877 when it acquired the adjacent 77 Eighth Avenue from John Jacob Astor in January of 1905. 77 had been a three-story brick printing house, leased to the firm of Styles & Cash.¹⁴ This purchase allowed the bank to increase its frontage on Eighth Avenue from 25.11 to 51.7 feet, while maintaining its 100-foot depth along 14th Street. Construction of the new banking quarters could not begin until 1906, as Styles & Cash held their lease until May of that year. In the meantime, the printing firm had begun to build its large, ten-story headquarters, designed by Charles E. Birge, at 135 West 14th Street.¹⁵

In February of 1906, Real Estate Record and Guide announced that the firm of De Lemos & Cordes had been commissioned to make plans for "the erection of a new bank, loft and office building...eight stories in height," in which the bank would occupy the first two floors.¹⁶ In April, the same weekly reported that the New Building Application had been filed for a one-story and attic building, by "De Lemos & Cordes, and R.L. Daus, successor."¹⁷ In a period of two months, not only was the scope and conception of the building dramatically altered, but De Lemos & Cordes had also associated themselves with a third architect for this commission, Rudolph L. Daus. Both the firm of De Lemos & Cordes and Daus had offices at 130 Fulton Street, although it is unclear exactly what Daus's relationship to the firm entailed; this association is not documented elsewhere. Plans and drawings (at the Municipal Archives) are likewise ambiguously signed, and it is therefore difficult to determine who was responsible, and to what extent, for the design of the bank.

The well-proportioned design of the building, although small in scale, reflects the gravity and importance of the New York County National Bank's financial operations by employing the monumental, classical type. The bank building is well-suited to its neighborhood environment, while embodying the Beaux-Arts clarity of function and structure.

Robertson's New York Bank for Savings, located at the northwest corner of 14th Street and Eighth Avenue, may have inspired the comparable scale of the New York County National Bank. Both banks occupy important corner sites on the broad axis of a busy intersection; both are clad in similar materials; and both are designed in compatible but significantly different classical styles. The relationship of the two banks also reflects the urban idealism current in the City Beautiful Movement. One recent observer states:

In particular, the value of the ensemble is generated by the volumetric correspondence of the two buildings, which is derived by typologically similar uses of the buildings, but it is also an overall ordering device which allows stylistic freedom under the umbrella of classical forms.¹⁸

Indeed, within their type, the two buildings offer quite diverse solutions to the design of a classical bank. Robertson's New York Bank for Savings features a temple front and a dome, recalling Roman, or perhaps, Palladian models. In contrast, the architects of the New York County National Bank selected an overall planar, flat-roofed design in which a trabeated order and arcuated bays are superimposed, a configuration recalling the Neo-Grec style of the 1840's in France. The striking juxtaposition of the two banks represents sensitive, civic-minded urbanism, creating a coherent, visual unity, which is, at the same time, enlivened by stylistic variation.

De Lemos & Cordes

Theodore W. De Lemos (1850-1909) and August W. Cordes (1850-?) were both natives of Germany who received their formal and professional education in Europe before arriving in the United States in the 1880's. They formed a long-lasting partnership in 1884. The firm of De Lemos & Cordes was active in designing some of the largest retail and commercial buildings in New York: the immense, classically-inspired Siegel-Cooper Dry Goods Store, (1895); the exuberant, Beaux-Arts style Adams Dry Goods Store, (1900); and the over-scaled Renaissance style palazzo, Macy's Department Store, (1901). Other works include the Fulton Building, (1893), on the corner of Fulton and Nassau Streets, a nine-story commercial building in which the firm had its offices. De Lemos & Cordes also designed another bank building, for Speyer & Company, (1903), at 24 Pine Street. Executed in a robust, Renaissance palazzo style with coursed stone and pedimented windows, the design is an adaptation of the style of a private club to the needs of an exclusive banking firm. Speyer & Company was highlighted in Architectural Record as a successful solution to the low-scale, monumental bank.¹⁹ The critical reception of this work may have prompted the New York County National Bank to commission De Lemos & Cordes for the design of their new quarters.²⁰

Rudolph Lawrence Daus (1854-1916)

Rudolph L. Daus was born in Mexico, but moved to New York at an early age. He was educated in New York, Berlin, and Paris, where he graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1879. While a student at the prestigious Ecole, Daus received several prizes and medals for excellence, including the Achille LeClerc Prize for being a top-ranking student in his class.

With high recommendations from the Ecole, Daus returned to New York in c. 1880 and entered the office of the prominent Beaux-Arts architect, Richard Morris Hunt. He worked as an assistant on Hunt's residence for William K. Vanderbilt at Fifth Avenue and 52nd Street.

In 1884, Daus established an office in Brooklyn and became one of that borough's most notable architects. Although his practice was centered there, he moved his office in 1896 to the Fulton Building. In 1898, he was appointed Secretary to the Commission for New York City's Building Laws and during 1899-1900, he served as Surveyor of Buildings in Brooklyn. In addition to these professional affiliations, he was also a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and at one time served as president of the Brooklyn Chapter. He was also an active member of the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects.

During the 1880's and early 1890's, Daus designed several Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne style residences in Brooklyn, in addition to notable public and institutional buildings: the Thirteenth Regiment Armory, (1891); the Lincoln Club, (now Mechanics Temple, 1889, a designated New York City Landmark); and the German Hospital, (1902, demolished). Daus's work from the late 1890's and early 1900's reflects the influence of neo-Renaissance and Beaux-Arts styles. In 1897, he designed the Italianate style Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Brooklyn and a small office building in Jersey City, N.J., for the New York and New Jersey Telephone Company, the composition of which is quite similar to the New York County National Bank. In 1902-05, Daus designed the extension of the Brooklyn Hall of Records, (demolished), the grand, main facade featuring superimposed trabeated and arcuated orders, surmounted by a balustrade; the bank design employs the same scheme. In addition to several commercial buildings, Daus also designed the neo-Renaissance style Flatbush Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, (1905), as well as other branches: Greenpoint, City Park (now Walt Whitman), and Saratoga. In 1908, Daus retired to Paris.²¹

Description

The former New York County National Bank is a flat-roofed, one-story building with a basement, rising fifty-eight feet on the southwest corner of Eighth Avenue and 14th Street. The building is set on a concrete base, (painted grey), and has brick foundations. Steel girders and reinforced interior columns form the supporting armature of the structure, allowing large openings in the wall surface for windows. The projected cost was \$250,000, and the bank is clad in South Dover white marble with a rubbed surface, which has recently been painted to match the original color of the stone.²²

The building incorporates two superimposed classical architectural systems: a major, trabeated order and a minor, arcuated order. This compositional device orders and unifies the two street elevations, which are given different emphasis in the design. The narrow, principal facade on Eighth Avenue, 51.8 feet wide, forms the grand, pedimented, entrance portico, while the four-bay, 100-foot side elevation reflects the large space of the banking room behind it.

The entrance portico consists of two broad corner piers and two fluted Ionic columns in antis, supporting a continuous entablature with a dentilled cornice, the triangular pediment, and a paneled parapet. Set back and enframed by the trabeated members is a large, round arch. The bank's entrance, reached by broad steps, is through an elaborately carved stone aedicule set within the paneled archway with its original metal framing. (The original bronze doors have been replaced by modern, glass doors).

On the bank's 14th Street elevation, broad corner piers flank a four-bay arcade. The round arches are framed by Ionic pilasters--visually stressing the vertical support of the structure--which are surmounted by the continuous entablature, and a classical balustrade at roof level. Set within the iron-framed, multi-paned glazing of each arched opening is a marble aediculated window enframement, recalling the composition of the entrance portico with its carved, stone door frame.

The planar surface of the piers on both elevations contrasts effectively with the precisely and elegantly carved ornamental detail. Laurel garlands define the top edge of the base and outline the aedicules, which are also accented by carved florettes on small square panels and scrolled and fluted keystones with classical motifs. The keystone in the entrance arch is ornamented with a carved head. Keystones in the arches of the side elevation have feathered carving, while those in the aedicules have winged, serpentine staffs. The entrance aedicule has a festooned, oval medallion above its entablature, while the aedicated windows have triangular pediments trimmed with classical moldings. In addition to egg-and-dart moldings, rows of bead and stylized tulip moldings are also used, such as in the soffits of the arches. The deeply-carved spandrels of the arches contain convex stone rondels; on the left, the spandrels are filled with laurel, and on the right, with oak leaves. In the entrance arch, the naturalistic foliage surrounds symbolic books and a ledger. A monumental eagle with broad, open wings and a neck swooping downward, as if in a protective manner, is contained within the pediment of the entrance facade. In the original drawings, the eagle's head was raised, but the design was changed; as executed, the pedestrian approaching the bank has more direct interaction with the noble creature.

Pedestals surmounted by bronze, columnar lamps originally flanked the entrance steps, but they have been removed. An electric sign on the Eighth Avenue frieze, reading "Manufacturers Hanover Trust" masks the original carving, "New York County National Bank." Another modern electric sign bearing the name of the current bank is suspended from the corner of the building.

In 1926, an addition was constructed on the adjacent site at 75 Eighth Avenue. While situated on the designated Landmark Site, this is not a significant structure.

Conclusion

In 1921, the New York County National Bank merged with Chatham and Phenix National Bank; three years later, this institution merged with the Metropolitan Trust Company, forming the Chatham-Phenix National Bank and Trust Company. In 1932, this bank was acquired by Manufacturers Trust Company, which later became the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, who continue to use the building as a branch.

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NOTES

1. Works Progress Administration, New York City Guide, (1939; rpt. New York, 1970), 145-51.
2. See LPC, (Former) New York Bank for Savings Designation Report, (New York, 1987).
3. A.C. David, "Private Residences for Banking Firms," Architectural Record, 14, No. 1 (July 1903), 13-14. See also Robert A.M. Stern, et al, New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915, (New York, 1983), 177.
4. David, 18.
5. Ibid., 13.
6. Stern, 181.
7. "Recent Bank Buildings of the United States," AR, 25, No. 1 (Jan. 1909), 1-3.
8. Ibid., 4.
9. Richard Guy Wilson, "The Great Civilization," The American Renaissance, 1876-1917, (New York, 1979), 11-16.
10. Ibid., 21.
11. Montgomery Schuyler, "A Modern Classic," AR, 15 (May 1904), 431. In fact, the Knickerbocker Trust Co. was designed as a thirteen-story office building of which only the base was completed. See Stern, 184. See also "Recent Bank Buildings," 9, which states that McKim, Mead & White have contributed to "establishing a higher standard of popular taste."
12. William Jordy, American Buildings and their Architects: Progressive and Academic Ideals at the Turn of the Twentieth Century, (Garden City, NY, 1976), 347-8.
13. Schuyler, 440.
14. "Conveyances," Real Estate Record and Guide, No. 1925 (Feb. 4, 1905), 267, and "Bank Building for Eighth Avenue," No. 1926 (Feb. 11, 1905), 302.
15. RER&G, No. 1930 (Mar. 11, 1905), 521, and No. 1932 (Mar. 25, 1905), 632.
16. "New Building for the New York County National Bank," RER&G, No. 1980 (Feb. 24, 1906), 325.
17. "Projected Buildings," RER&G, No. 1987 (Apr. 14, 1906), 704. See also NYC, Dept. of Buildings, Manhattan, Folder for Block 629, Lot 35, (NB 347-06). The NB application was signed by De Lemos, as authorized

representative of the bank. One clause states that work proposed is to be performed by "the firm of De Lemos & Cordes, resp. their successor, Mr. R.L. Daus." Dockets list Daus. Plans and Drawings were also published in American Architect and Building News, 89 (Jun. 23, 1906), and attributed to "De Lemos & Cordes and R.L. Daus, associated architects."

18. Charles Ayes, testimony given before the LPC at a public hearing, Sept. 15, 1987.
19. See David, 13-27.
20. Despite the number of buildings designed by De Lemos & Cordes, not much has been written about the firm. See Withey and Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles, 1970), 141, 167-78; A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City During the Last Quarter of a Century, (1898, rpt. New York, 1967), 677; and David, 13-27. Several buildings were illustrated in Architectural Record and American Architect and Building News at their time of completion; consult the Avery Index.
21. See Withey & Withey, 162; LPC, Lincoln Club Designation Report, (New York, 1981); and R.L. Daus, The Work of Rodolphe Lawrence Daus, (New York, 1947), a scrapbook compiled by the New York Public Library, including text, illustrations and materials from the files of the Brooklyn Public Library, donated by Henriette Daus, daughter of the architect. Also included are the following obituaries: Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Oct. 16, 1916, and Oct. 17, 1916; New York Times, Oct. 16, 1916; and The New York Herald, Paris edition, Oct. 19, 1916.
22. NYC, Dept. of Buildings, (NB application 347-06), and "New York County National Bank," Architects' and Builders' Magazine, 40, No. 3 (Dec., 1907), 117-122.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

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 Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company Building has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company Building, built in 1907, is an exceptionally fine and well-conceived example of the neo-classical bank type; that the overall design, though small in scale, employs the monumental classical type in a unified and structurally expressive manner; that the well-proportioned composition superimposes two classical architectural systems, a trabeated and an arcuated order; that the design is enhanced by fine stone carving, which incorporates Beaux-Arts ornamental motifs, classical symbols, and naturalistic elements; that among the noteworthy ornamental details are the entrance and window aedicules, the foliated spandrels, the classical balustrade and the imposing eagle in the pediment; that the architects, De Lemos & Cordes, were a successful firm responsible for some of New York's largest and most impressive retail stores, as well as residential and commercial buildings; that their successor, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts trained Rudolph L. Daus, was one of Brooklyn's foremost architects, who designed several public and institutional buildings in that borough; that the bank occupies a prominent corner site at the axis of two major thoroughfares; and that, paired with its counterpart, the New York Bank for Savings located across 14th Street, the two banks form a striking classical ensemble reflective of sensitive, civic-minded urbanism, symbolically linking the neighborhoods of Greenwich Village and Chelsea.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, 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 Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company Building, 77-79 Eighth Avenue, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 629, Lot 35 as its Landmark Site.

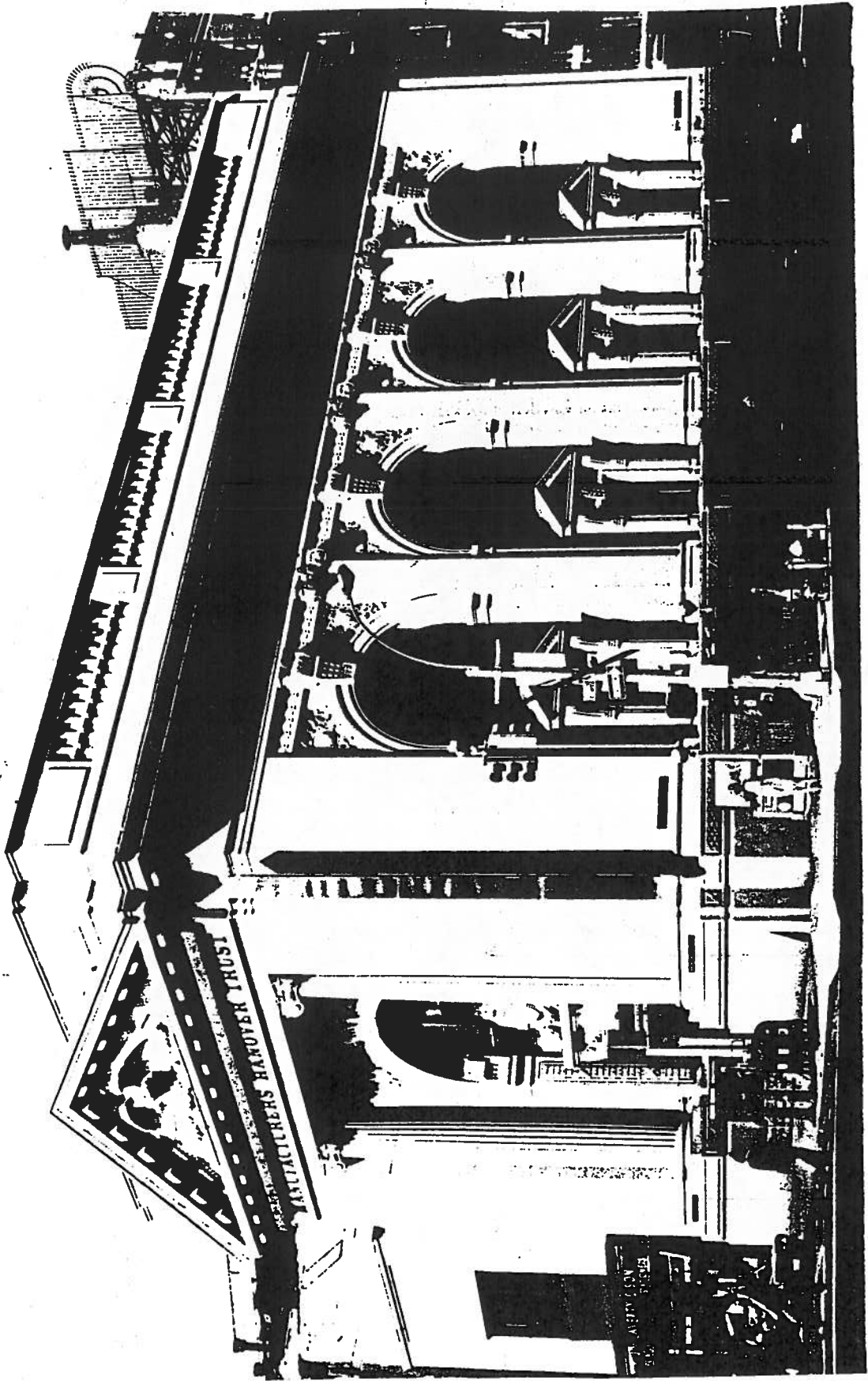
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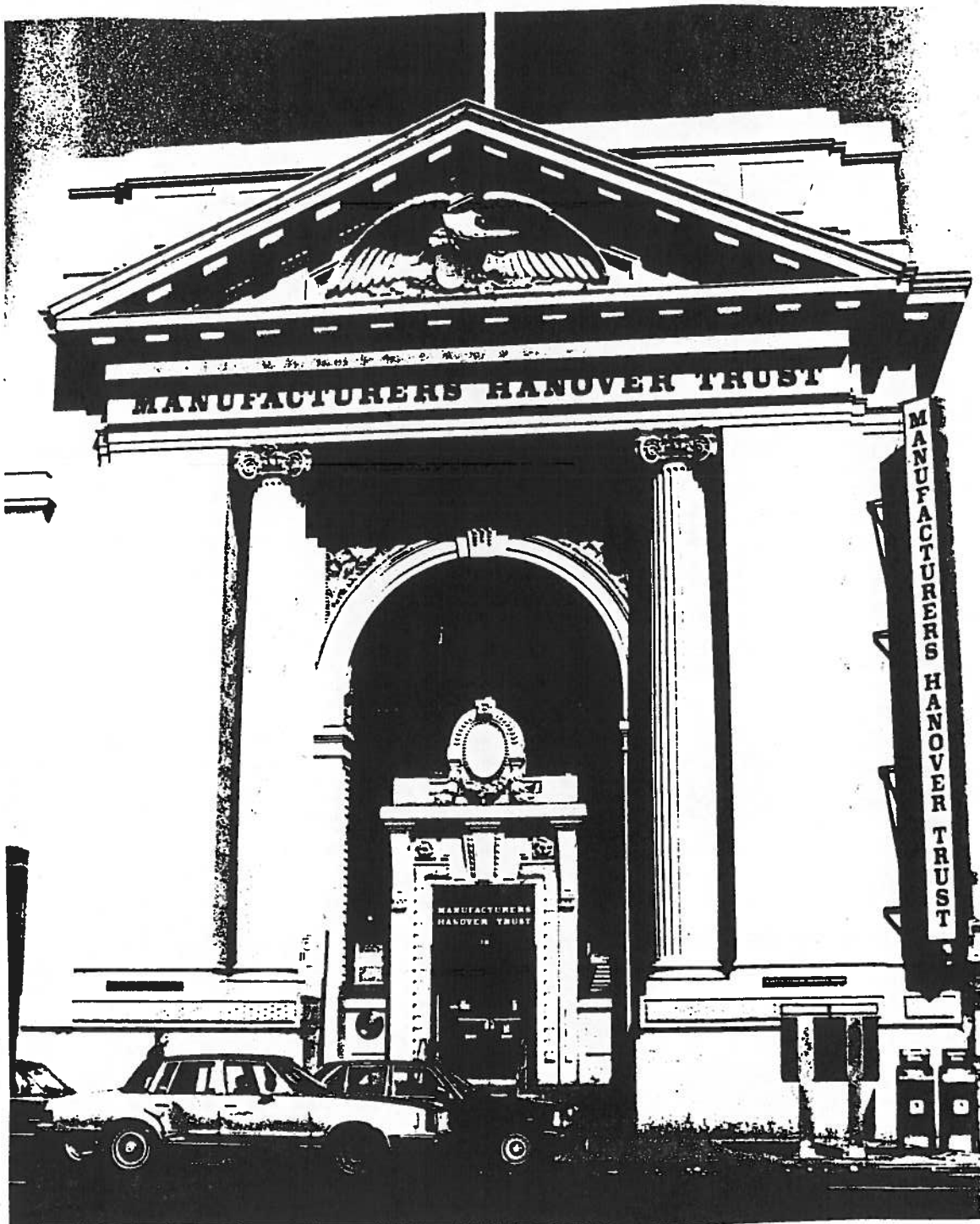
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Manufacturers Hanover Bank, 1907
77-79 Eighth Avenue

Architects: De Lemos & Cordes, and
Rudolph L. Daus, Successor
Photo credit: Carl Forster



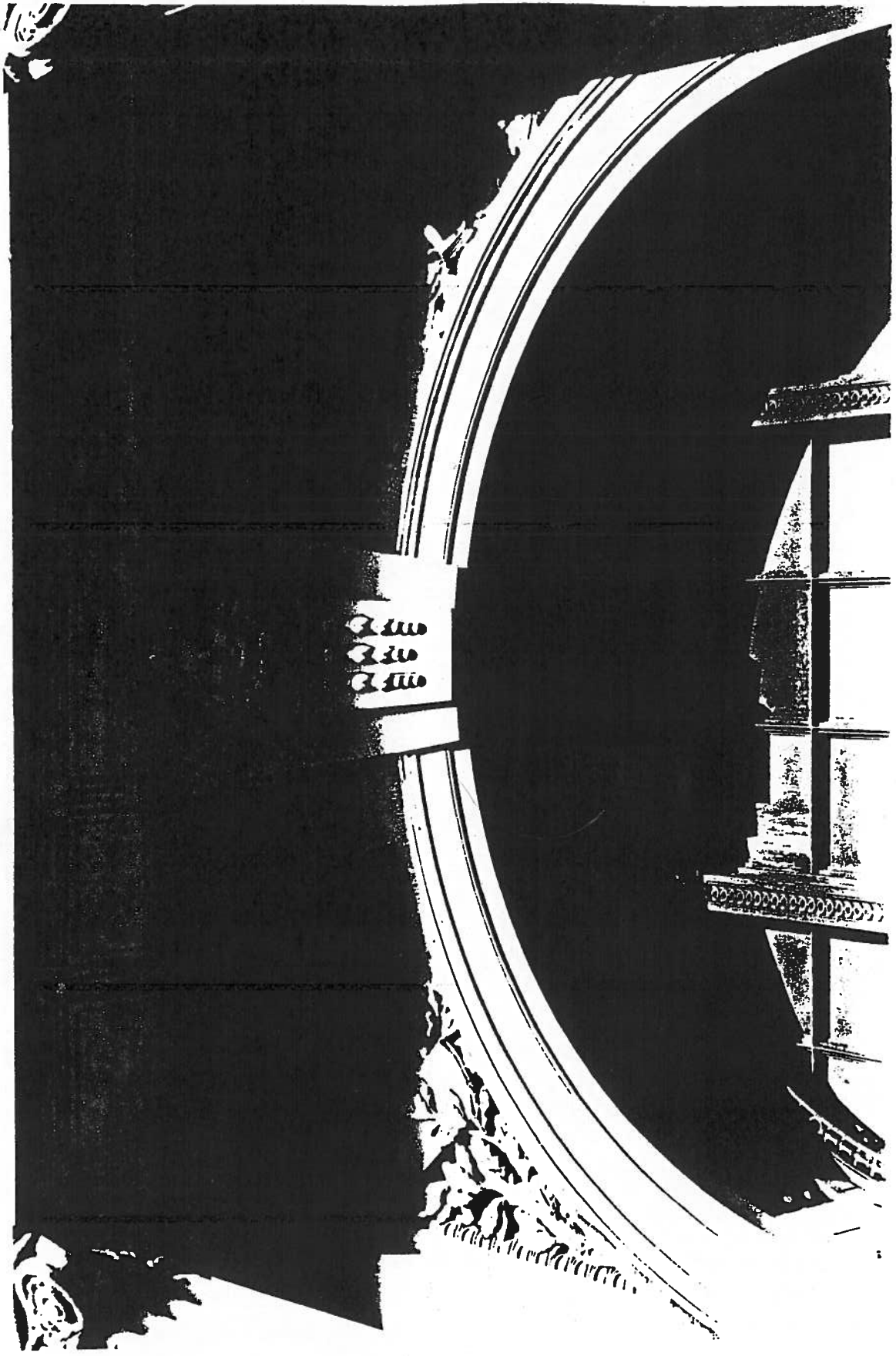
Manufacturers Hanover Bank
Eighth Avenue facade

Photo credit: Carl Forster



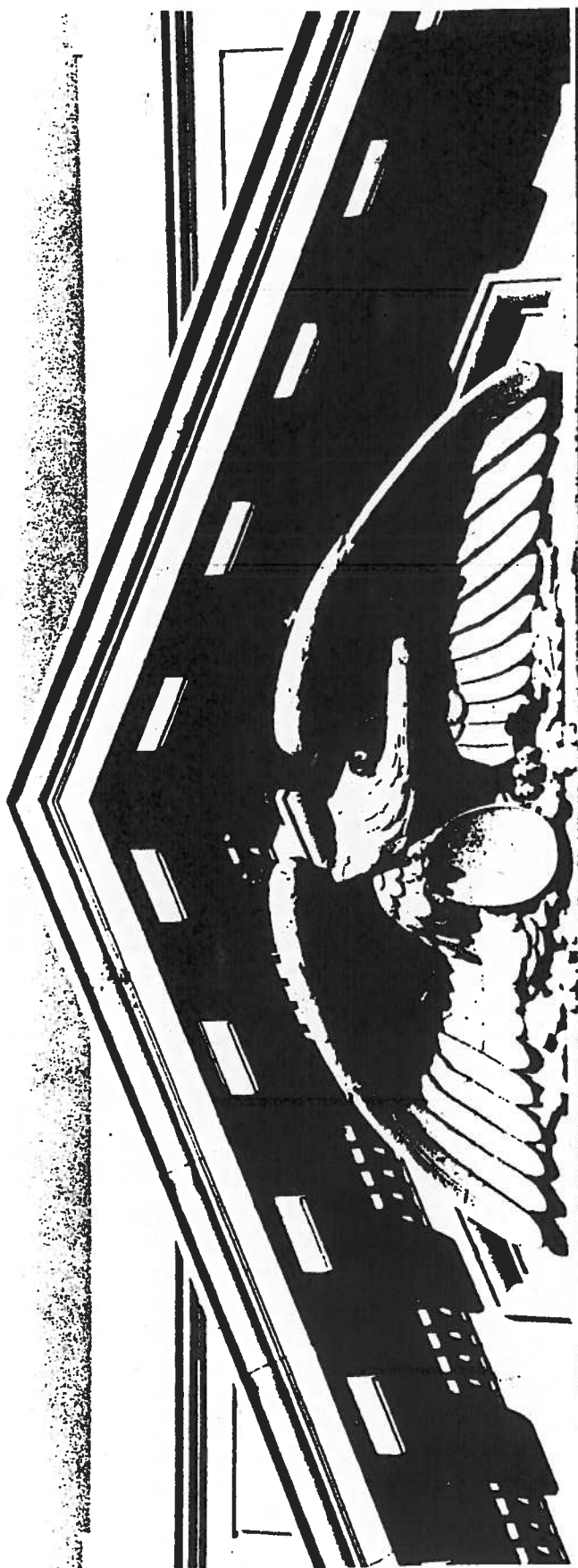
Manufacturers Hanover Bank
Detail, Eighth Avenue facade, entrance

Photo credit: Carl Forster



Manufacturers Hanover Bank
Detail, Eighth Avenue facade, spandrels and keystone

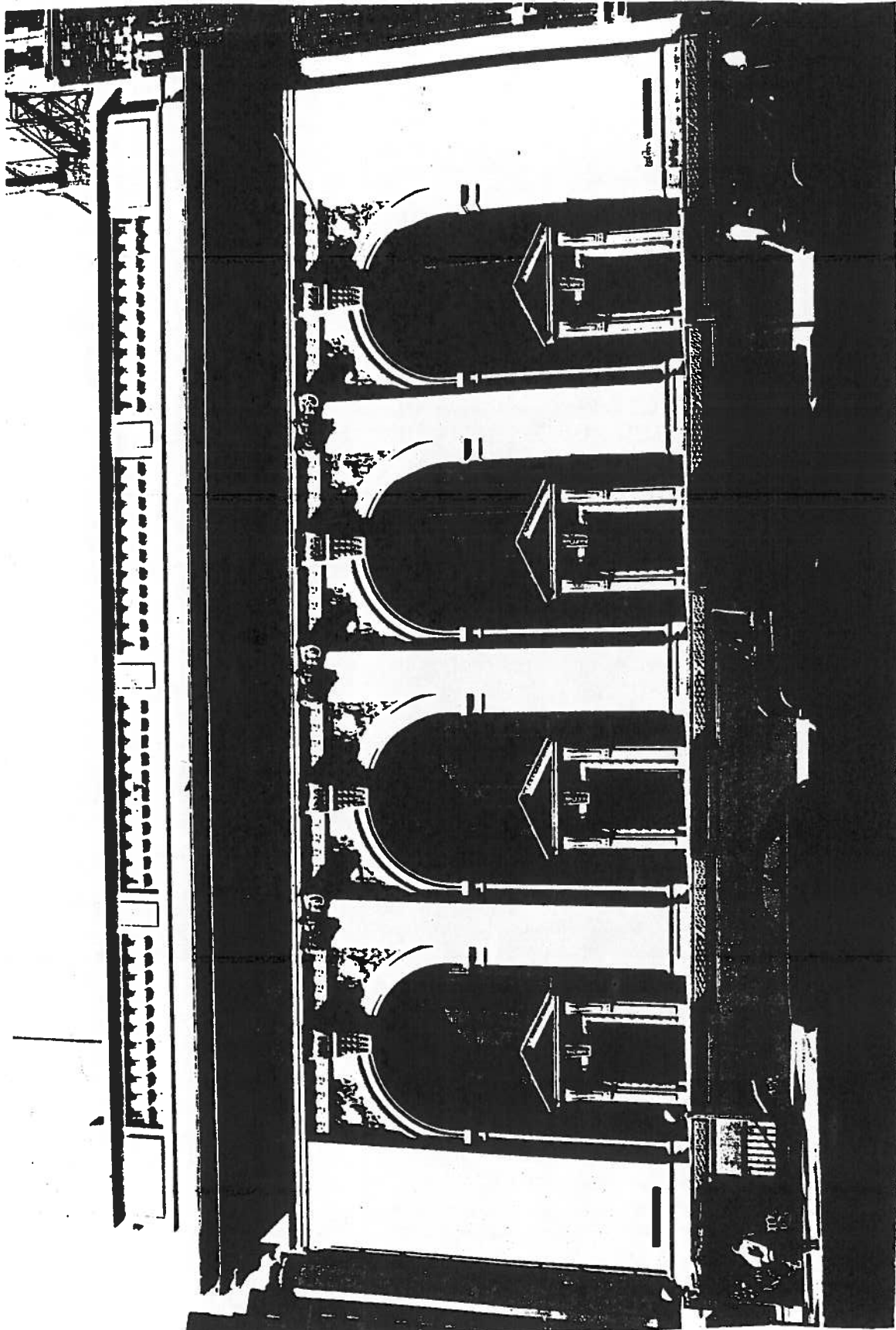
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FACTURERS HANOVER 1

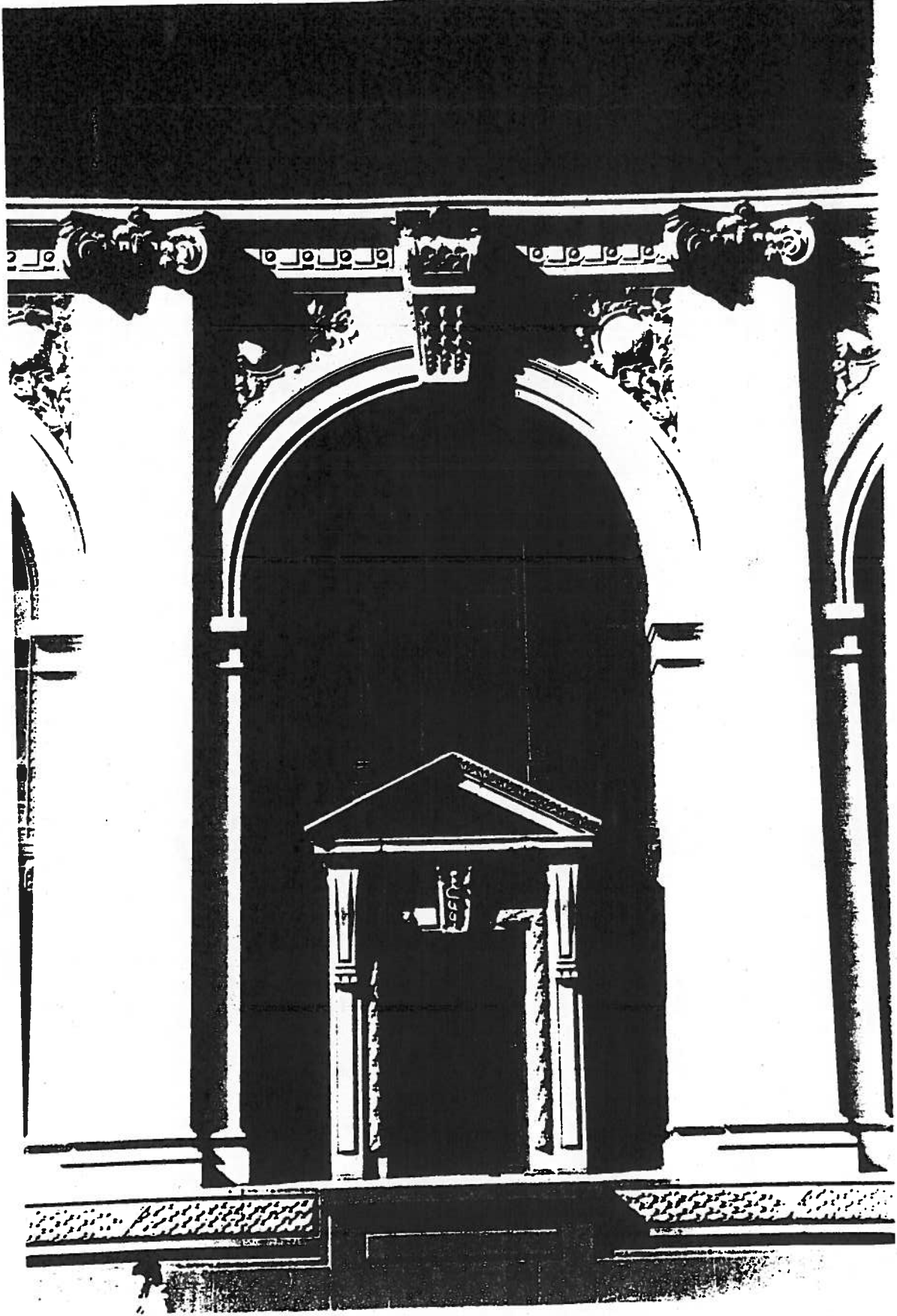
Manufacturers Hanover Bank
Detail, Eighth Avenue facade, pediment

Photo credit: Carl Forster



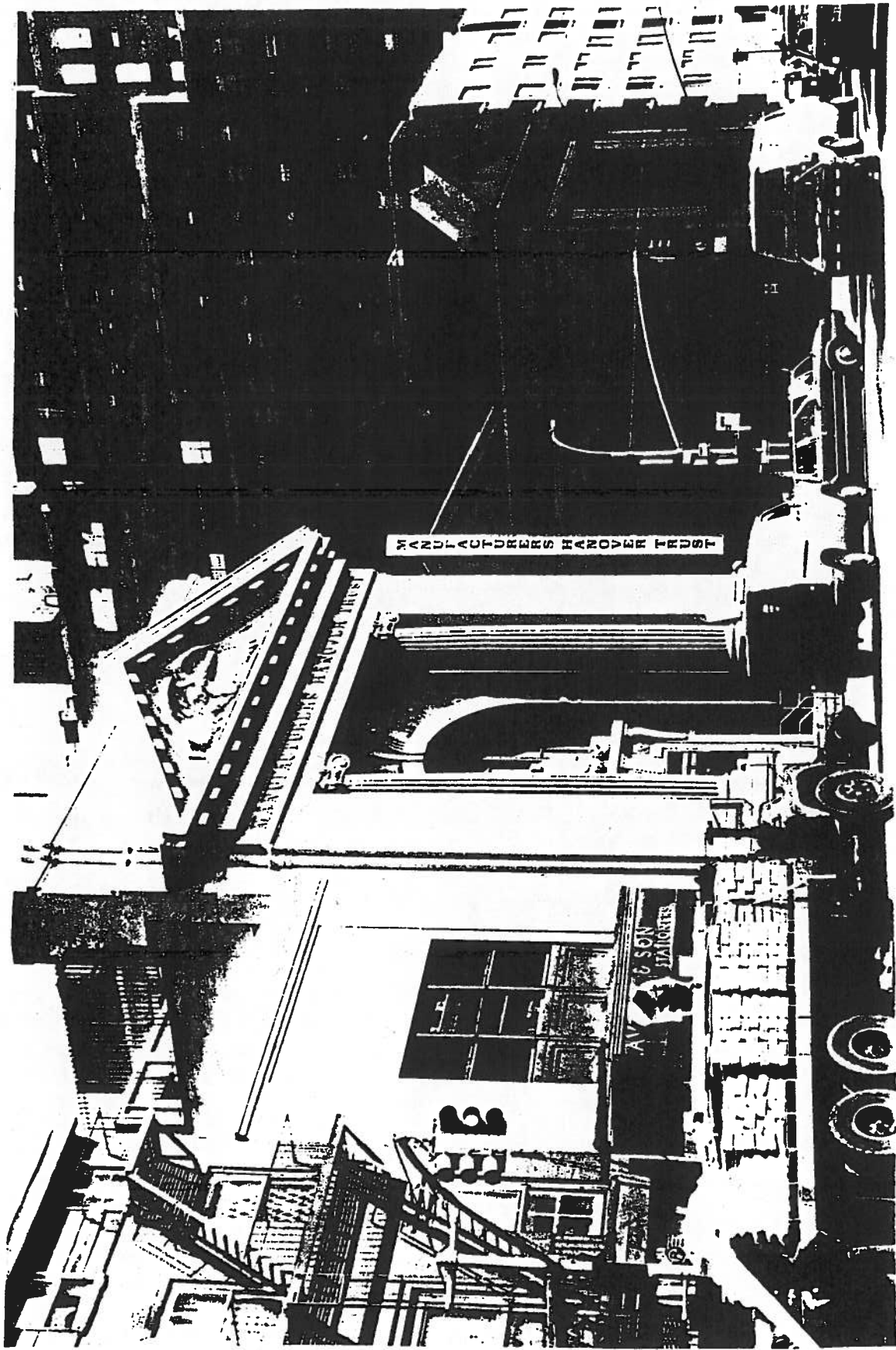
Manufacturers Hanover Bank
14th Street elevation

Photo credit: Carl Forster



Manufacturers Hanover Bank
Detail, 14th Street elevation, window bay

Photo credit: Carl Forster



Manufacturers Hanover Bank
View from the south

Photo credit: Carl Forster