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Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 18, 1988; Designation List 210
LP-1561

BUSH TOWER, 130-132 West 42nd Street and 133-137 West 41st Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1916-18, 1921; Helmle & Corbett, architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 994, Lot 45 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On November 23, 1985, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Bush Tower (Item No. 16). Two witnesses spoke in favor of the designation and a statement in support of designation was read into the record. On March 11, 1986 the Landmarks Preservation Commission again held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Bush Tower (Item No. 4). A representative of the building's owner appeared but took no position on designation. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The Bush Tower, designed by the prominent architectural firm of Helmle & Corbett and built in 1916-18 (added to in 1921)¹, was an influential prototype for set-back skyscrapers, even though it was designed prior to the adoption of the 1916 law mandating the set-back form; the set-backs of the Bush Tower were described by Corbett as a purely architectural and aesthetic solution. Combining historical neo-Gothic detailing with a modern, pronounced vertical emphasis, the building represents an important intermediate stage in the development of the skyscraper. Secondary elevations finished with an innovative treatment of trappe l'oeil colored brick piers, and the engineering solutions for the tower-like steel-frame building erected on a very narrow plot were features of interest. Built for the Bush Terminal Company, the Bush Terminal International Exhibit Building and Buyers Club, as the building was originally named, housed merchandise showrooms located for the convenience of out-of-town buyers in midtown Manhattan. Two ten-story wings facing 41st Street, also designed by Helmle & Corbett, continue the simplified neo-Gothic style of the thirty-story tower.

The Bush Terminal Company and Irving T. Bush²

As a young oil company executive who saw the need to reduce commercial traffic congestion in New York Harbor, Irving T. Bush (1869-1948) organized a warehousing firm in 1895, the Bush Company, Ltd. In 1902 he established the Bush Terminal Company which grew to occupy thirty city blocks in South Brooklyn and included extensive lofts, warehouses, and piers for manufacturing, storing, and shipping goods.

Irving Bush was a prominent member of the New York business community who pursued his interests in world commerce and international affairs. He often wrote and spoke on these topics and used the Bush Magazine of Factory and Shipping Economy and his book, Working with the World, to express his belief in the necessity of the close coordination of production, transportation and marketing. The expansion of the Bush Terminal Company with the construction of the Bush Tower in New York City and the Bush House in London reflected this philosophy. The Bush Terminal Company suffered at the onset of the Depression and in 1933 Irving T. Bush lost control of the company temporarily in conjunction with bankruptcy proceedings; he regained control and actively managed the company until the time of his death.

"A Modern Temple of Trade at the Center of the World's Markets"³

The Bush Terminal International Exhibit Building and Buyers' Club, as the Bush Tower was originally named, was envisioned by Irving Bush in 1916 as a great centralized market where there would be a complete display of the world's goods for sale.⁴ The skyscraper near Times Square, designed by the firm of Helmle & Corbett, was planned to house a Buyers' Club and twenty floors of merchandise showrooms (which could also be used as offices). Both a ten-story wing that extended from the tower, built in 1917, and an annex of equal height, built in 1921, were also designed by Helmle & Corbett.⁵

A centralized merchandise showroom was not an entirely new idea, but the Bush project was broader in scope than contemporary facilities in New York. Several tall showroom buildings were constructed during the pre-World War I era, including an eleven-story showroom for period furnishings (18 East 50th Street) in 1916. Plans had been announced in 1913 for a Pan American Sales Building in New York City. This grand building which was never constructed would have housed permanent exhibits of American products, and would have provided club rooms, an information and translation bureau, and other services. The centralized showroom idea endured and the Century Apartments (25 Central Park West; a designated New York City Landmark), built in 1931, was initially planned to incorporate exhibits of French manufactured goods.⁶

The small building site and the need for unpartitioned display areas in the Bush Tower presented engineering problems to the architect. The 450' high tower was built on a narrow plot fifty by ninety feet, and was one of the "highest buildings over so small a ground area" built at that time in New York City. Since there were no interior partitions throughout much of the building in which to conceal cross bracing, Helmle & Corbett used extra heavy plate girders and strong knee braces at all columns.⁷ Construction proceeded rapidly, and the steel frame of the tower portion of the building was erected in four months. By October, 1917 all exterior work was finished, the interior was nearing completion, and the steel framing of the 41st Street wing had been erected. The building opened officially in December, 1917.⁸

To manufacturers, many of whom were tenants of the Bush Terminal Company complex in Brooklyn, Bush offered large exhibit halls which were publicized as display areas of fireproof construction with efficient ventilation systems and a modern system of lighting. The merchandise displays, grouped by type of product, would be cared for by trained salesmen; shipping and forwarding services could be provided by the Bush Terminal Company. The Buyers' Club on the lower three floors was decorated in an "Old English" style. In addition to the well-appointed dining room and lounges, communication services and a reading room were provided. Free membership in the Buyers' Club would be provided to applicants proposed by reputable firms.⁹

The site which had been occupied by a vacant four-story building was considered a prime location.¹⁰ Located midway between the two great railroad terminals of the city and near several subway, surface and elevated lines, the building was in the center of the hotel and theater district, and within a short distance of nearly all the great department stores of New York. The location was obviously chosen for its attractiveness to and convenience for out-of-town buyers whose patronage was essential to the scheme's success.

The Bush Tower project coincided with the reconstruction of the midtown area. In the pre-World War I years the area bounded by the Herald and Times Squares was the site of the most extensive development in the city. In 1916 the New York Times noted increased commercial activity in the Grand Central-Fifth Avenue area, and the Bush Tower was listed as the most westerly of thirteen major construction projects underway near Madison Avenue.¹¹ Other new tall buildings in the area included the Candler Building (220 West 42nd Street), the World's Tower Building (110 West 40th Street), and the Aeolian Building (33 West 42nd Street) overlooking Bryant Park.

The upper portion of Bush Tower was illuminated at night and became a noted feature in the city skyline as well as a corporate symbol of the Bush Terminal Company. The building was often pictured in company publications with attention drawn to the similarity of the building and its location to European Gothic cathedrals and adjacent market areas.¹²

The Architects: Helmle & Corbett¹³

Helmle & Corbett was a prominent New York firm from 1912 until Helmle's retirement in 1928 soon after Wallace Harrison joined the firm. Frank J. Helmle (1869-1937) began working in Brooklyn around 1890 and with several associates designed a wide variety of buildings. His Brooklyn Central Office, Bureau of Fire Communications (1913) is a designated New York City Landmark and several of his residences and public buildings are located within New York City historic districts.

Harvey Wiley Corbett (1873-1954), through his professional visibility and superior talent, dominated the partnership. Corbett earned an engineering degree from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1895 before entering the Ecole des Beaux-Arts the next year. Corbett worked in the atelier of Jean Louis Pascal and received his diploma in 1900. Corbett's first years in New York were spent in brief stints working for several architects including Cass Gilbert. His

partnership with F. Livingston Pell produced the design for the Municipal Group in Springfield, Massachusetts, which was awarded the Architectural League Medal of Honor in 1908.

In 1912, Corbett and Frank J. Helmle formed the firm of Helmle & Corbett whose first projects included several factories and industrial buildings in Brooklyn. Their most well-known building of this type in Manhattan was the Fletcher Building (1922). After the successful Bush Tower design, Helmle & Corbett earned the admiration of their British peers for the Bush House (1920-24) in London, characterized as "big-business classic" in style.

During the late 1920s, Corbett continued to explore the possibilities of skyscraper design with a variety of associates. He experimented with the elimination of historically inspired detailing, three-dimensional sculpturing of the set-back towers, and the use of color shading in the designs of Number One Fifth Avenue (within the Greenwich Village Historic District), the Master Building, and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company North Building.

As a writer, educator, and planner Corbett was a prominent figure in the architectural community. He wrote frequently about architecture for the popular press, architectural periodicals, and reference works. The much publicized zoning envelope drawings developed with Hugh Ferriss established his reputation as a theorist who was an optimistic believer in planned urban density. As one of the Associated Architects who designed Rockefeller Center (a designated New York City Landmark), Corbett was able to realize some of his urban planning concepts.

Corbett's stylistic development paralleled that of many American architects trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition and his early works evidenced a mastery of historical styles. His 1920s skyscrapers were considered innovative and daring, and Corbett was a leading figure in the definition of a modern style. During the debates in the early 1930s over Modernism, Corbett was aligned with the "traditional" Modernists such as Raymond Hood and Ely Jacques Kahn. His later work was influenced by the International style.

The New York Times noted that one could look out of almost any window in Manhattan and see a building designed by Harvey Wiley Corbett; he built high into the sky and it would be for his skyscrapers that he would be remembered.¹⁴

"The Arrow:"¹⁵ The Design of the Bush Tower

The design of the Bush Tower reflects an important intermediate stage in the development of the skyscraper, a transition from the historically inspired structures built prior to World War I and the post-war towers characterized by vertical articulation. The Bush Tower combines neo-Gothic ornamentation with a pronounced vertical emphasis.¹⁶

The neo-Gothic street level facade was a refinement of an earlier design, more typical of the period, into a restrained statement where Gothic detailing supported another, more dominant design program. And although Corbett simplified prototypes, most notably the Woolworth Building (architect Cass Gilbert, 1913; a designated New York City Landmark), and made the Gothic elements enhance his emphasis on verticality, he had yet to take the step that Raymond Hood took in 1923 with the American Radiator Company Building (a designated New York City Landmark) in modernizing the neo-Gothic language.

The domination of historical ornamentation by a vertical emphasis also blurred the classically-inspired traditional division of the tower into thirds, and some vertical lines are carried from base to top. Piers at the street level were carried upward as ribs articulating the main shaft of the tower, and merged into pinnacles in the Gothic detailing at the top of the building. In Corbett's words, "The whole mass of the building [was], of course, vertical, and everything possible in designing was done to accentuate this verticality."¹⁷

Corbett saw his skyscraper as a "towering mass"¹⁸ with four sides, not an infill tower with one street facade. In 1926, in an article for the Saturday Evening Post, he described the design problem for the layman:

We wanted to make the structure a model for the tall, narrow building in the center of a city block. We were determined it should be a thing complete in itself, with fine, clean uprising lines; a building that could be looked at from every angle, sides and back as well as front, rather than a long peppermint box on end with holes punched in the sides for windows and a stray gumdrop on top by way of a water tank. ...Part of our scheme was an appropriate finish for the top which should give the entire building the appearance of a soaring cathedral tower.¹⁹

In his three-dimensional approach to the building, the side elevations presented a design challenge; the decision had been made to build to the lot line which prevented the use of windows or projecting architectural elements. The solution, the use of trompe l'oeil piers of colored brick to divide the remaining wall area into vertical sections, was an often imitated device used by tall building designers in New York City.²⁰ Corbett described the design process:

...the architects made drawings of the side walls as though the building stood free all round with plenty of room for reveals and projections. The drawing was then rendered to shadows at forty-five degrees, the shadows being in dark and the highlights in white. The drawings was then interpreted in brick of buff color for the general field, white for highlights, and black for shadows.²¹

The Bush Tower was predicted, at the time of its construction, to be the last of the skyscrapers due to the adoption of the 1916 zoning

ordinance.²² In fact, Corbett's design soon came to be regarded as a prototype of set-back design, a building of the future rather than of the past. Although some of his contemporaries suspected that Corbett was thinking of forthcoming set-back requirements when he designed the Bush Tower, the set-back design was a visual choice. Corbett wrote:

The building [was] not, as sometimes supposed, the first example of the new set-back idea resulting from the New York Zoning Law. Plans for the building were drawn before the law went into effect. The set-backs were conceived purely for architectural and aesthetic reasons.

...Cutting off six stories at the corners formed the first set-back; setting in the next three... on all sides formed the second. In such ways the building got its finish.²³

The set-back top story concealed the rooftop water tank and elevator housing unit. This was still a relatively novel idea, and Corbett later related a conversation during which an anonymous client (probably Bush) asked:

Hm. What's that gadget on top? Looks pretty fancy to me. Any office space in it? What? It contains the water tank and elevator machinery? Holy Smoke! Haven't you got all outdoors to put those things in?²⁴

The impact of the Bush Tower design upon an architectural community faced with set-back regulations was considerable. The editor of the American Architect suggested that "certain features of this important structure no doubt suggestively influenced the present development of the stepped back type of tall buildings."²⁵ Another observer pictured Corbett in his office on the top floor of the Bush Tower watching the fulfillment of his prophecy as additional set-back towers were constructed.²⁶

Many contemporary critics praised the Bush Tower for a variety of aesthetic and practical reasons.²⁷ In 1926 the building was named "commercial building of the decade" by the American Architect.²⁸ That same year the noted architectural historian Talbot Hamlin wrote that the building

strikes at the heart of modern sky-scraper design, accepts the problem in its entirety, even to the bare party walls and makes its effect by using precisely the necessary elements: extreme verticality to express steel structure, a poly-chromatic brick patterning of the party walls to make them contribute to the tower-like effect of the whole. At night, when floodlights set the delicate detail of the upper portions agleam, there arises the romance of a new American Beauty.²⁹

Corbett himself may have given the building the recognition it properly deserves by placing a photograph of the Bush Tower between those of the Woolworth Building and the Chicago Tribune Tower in his essay on architecture in Encyclopaedia Britannica.³⁰ And in his article on the design of the American Radiator Company Building, Raymond Hood acknowledged the role of the Bush Tower in skyscraper development by citing the influence of Corbett, Goodhue and Saarinen in the advancement of skyscraper design.³¹

Description

The Bush Tower, a thirty-story building facing on 42nd Street and the ten-story wing extending from the tower to 41st Street, is of steel-frame construction with curtain walls of buff brick and terra cotta. The building was constructed by the Thompson-Starrett Company and the South Amboy Terra Cotta Company supplied the terra cotta.³² Low neighboring structures, and a plaza area to the east reveal all facades of the tower and two facades of the wing.

A system of primary and secondary angular ribs articulate the north and south facades of the tall portion of the building that rises unbroken from street level to the twentieth story. The original one-over-one double-hung windows have been replaced with similar units with transoms. Trompe l'oeil piers and panels created by the use of lighter and darker brick enrich the secondary elevation walls. The east side wall is pierced by a one-bay by three-bay light court.

The limestone-faced street facade, the upper portion of which is unaltered, has a tripartite division of openings. Carvings in a nautical theme enrich the corbels, executed by John Donnelly & Co., Inc.,³³ below the third-story simple cornice, punctuated with shields, a motif used in the terra-cotta detailing of the piers and spandrels in the two stories immediately above. The two-story arched openings of the original design have been altered into square-headed openings framed by limestone-faced piers that join to the original ones above the mezzanine level.

At the top of the shaft, in a transitional area, a band of panels, which is continued unbroken with ribs screening the light court on the east facade, becomes a parapet wall at the corners. Copper lantern pinnacles top the wide, smooth brick piers that extend upward from the street to this height and finials top each rib extending through the parapet on the street facades. The upper shaft area, above the twentieth story, has angled corner walls filled with paired windows. Ribs continuing up through the street facades resolve in an elongated arched window which is echoed by the edge of balustrade wall enclosing the area above.

The crowning pavilion is set back on all four sides, but repeats the elongated octagonal form of the upper shaft. Above the windows, framed to appear as two-story tall arched windows, blank Gothic tracery divides the roof parapet wall. The copper roof originally was topped by a pair of finials with electric torches at the ends of the gabled ridge.

The portion of the ten-story wing next to the tower is set back to create a light court. On the exposed east side wall of the main portion of the wing trompe l'oeil piers and a band of shield-enriched panels marking the eighth story repeat the design of the tower portion. The exposed portion of the west side wall is buff-colored brick with windows in the sixth and seventh stories.

The 41st Street facade is detailed as the tower facades with angled and flat ribs dividing the window bays. Above the eighth story windows framed by projecting transoms, the ninth story is recessed behind truncated pinnacles at the building corners. The walls of the further recessed tenth-story penthouse have closely-set windows. The limestone faced storefronts are both divided into thirds by piers which support a wide transom with blank Gothic tracery supported by corbel stops in a cast foliate design. The eastern portion of the facade has been covered in modern materials.

The western facade, a secondary entrance to the movie theater,³⁴ appears to be the original design although no elevation drawings have been located. The central bay is framed by cast-stone faced piers from which quoins extend on the first story. This bay is nearly filled with wide, arched bronze doors with Gothic tracery slightly recessed in a deep Gothic arch. A shield-bearing lion guards the door in front of a cast-stone sheathed traceried arch which is tied into a blank Gothic tracery transom between the second and third stories. The outer bays have plain, double service doors topped with a cast-stone lintel.

Subsequent History

The lower floors of the building, initially the Buyers' Club, were occupied by the Hamilton Trust Company in the early 1920s and by the Old London Restaurant in 1931. The Bush Terminal Company lost the property to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in 1938 during foreclosure proceedings.

Alterations to the building have been limited to a series of street-level facade changes reflecting this changing use of the building,³⁵ and to the insertion of windows between the trompe l'oeil piers in the side walls in 1939.

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NOTES

1. NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 994, Lot 45. NB 174-1916.
2. This section is based on the Irving T. Bush obituary, New York Times, Oct. 22, 1948, p. 25; "A Tower that Symbolizes a Business Philosophy" Literary Digest (July 10, 1920), 74-75; Irving T. Bush, Who was Who in America, (Chicago, 1950) vol. 2, 1943-1950, 94; issues of the Bush Magazine of Factory and Shipping Economy; Irving T. Bush, Working with the World (Garden City, N.Y., 1928).
3. Photograph caption, Bush Magazine of Factory and Shipping Economy 4, no. 10 (Oct. 15, 1917), 22-23.
4. "Tall Merchandise Exhibition Building on Forty-Second Street at Times Square," NYT, (Apr. 16, 1916), III, p. 6, and "Begin Work on \$1,000,000 Times Square Building," NYT (Aug. 27, 1916), III, p. 2; "Bush Terminal Sales Building," Architecture and Building 50 (Dec., 1918), 59, 17, plates 154-160; The Bush Terminal International Exhibit Building and Buyers Club, (promotional brochure), New York, 1917.
5. NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 994, Lot 45. NB 174-1916 and amendments, and Block 994, Lot 17 amendment to NB 174-1916 for the 1921 annex; "New \$400,000 Annex to Bush Building," NYT, (Feb. 13, 1921), III, p. 1.
6. "Hampton Shop in New Quarters," Real Estate Record & Guide, (March 18, 1916), 424; "Will Be World's Highest Skyscraper," RER&G, (Oct. 4, 1913), 613; LPC, Century Apartments Designation Report, prepared by Andrew S. Dolkart (New York, 1985) 4.
7. Harvey Wiley Corbett, "Some Engineering Factors of the Bush Terminal Building, New York," American Architect 112 (Oct., 1917), 289-91.
8. Harvey Wiley Corbett, "The Bush Building" in Edward Warren Hoak and Willis Humphry Church, Masterpieces of Architecture in the United States (New York, 1930), 195.
9. The Bush Terminal International Exhibit Building and Buyers Club.
10. NYT, Apr. 16, 1916; NYT, August 27, 1916; Joseph P. Day, "A Real Estate Appreciation of the Bush Terminal Sales Building," The Bush Magazine of Factory and Shipping Economy (Feb., 1919), 1; The Bush Terminal International Exhibit Building and Buyers Club.
11. "Reconstruction in Midtown Zone," RER&G, (Aug. 8, 1914), 223; "Increased Commercial Activity in the 5th Avenue - Grand Central Zone," NYT, (May 7, 1916), III, p. 3.
12. This idea was often suggested in the The Bush Magazine of Factory & Shipping Economy; see the issues of Aug. 15, 1917; Sept. 15, 1917, p. 29; and Jan. 15, 1920, inside front cover.

13. This section is based on the following sources: Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, "Helmle, Frank J.," Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), (Los Angeles, 1956) 277-78; "Corbett, Harvey Wiley," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, (New York, 1982), 451-452; "Corbett, Harvey Wiley," Dictionary of American Biography, supplement 5, (New York, 1977), 133-134; "Corbett, Harvey Wiley," Who Was Who in America, vol. 3, 1951-1960 (Chicago, 1960), 184; Harvey Wiley Corbett obituary, The Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects 61 (July, 1954), 391; Harvey Corbett obituary, NYT, Apr. 22, 1954, p. 29; "Harvey Wiley Corbett," NYT, Apr. 23, 1954, p. 26; Harvey Wiley Corbett obituary, Architectural Forum 100 (May, 1954), 45-46; LPC, Rockefeller Center Designation Report, report prepared by Janet Adams (New York, 1985), 17; Harvey Wiley Corbett, "Facts, Factories and Frills," American Architect 113 (Feb., 1918), 233-38; Dennis S. Francis, Architects in Practice, New York City, 1840-1900, (New York, 1979), 90-91; Robert A.M. Stern, et. al., New York 1930, (New York, 1987), 340, 535-536, 546-647; Carol Willis, "Drawing Towards Metropolis" in Hugh Ferriss, The Metropolis of Tomorrow (1929; rpt. Princeton, 1986), 157-161; Norval White and Elliot Willensky, The AIA Guide to New York City, (New York, 1978).
14. NYT, Apr. 23, 1954, p. 26.
15. Fiske Kimball, American Architecture (New York, 1928), 205 and facing photograph. Kimball's metaphor captures the essence of Corbett's design solution.
16. For a survey of the development of the skyscraper see Winston Weisman, "A New View of Skyscraper History," in Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., ed., The Rise of an American Building Architecture (New York, 1970), 115-60; see also Leopold Arnaud, "The Tall Building in New York in the Twentieth Century," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 11 (May, 1952), 15-18; Robert A.M. Stern, New York 1930, "Scaffolding the Sky," 507-549.
17. "The Bush Building," 195. Corbett often wrote of his belief in the importance of vertical emphasis in tall building design; see Harvey Wiley Corbett: "High Buildings on Narrow Streets," American Architect 119 (June 8, 1921), 603-08, 617-19; "What the Architect Thinks of Zoning," American Architect 125 (Feb. 13, 1924), 149-150; "The Birth and Development of the Tall Building," American Architect 129 (Jan. 5, 1926), 37-40; "New Stones for Old," The Saturday Evening Post 198 (Mar. 27, 1926) 6-7, 150, 153; (May 8, 1926) 26-27, 285-286, 289-290; and (May 15, 1926) 16-17; "New Heights in American Architecture," The Yale Review n.s. 17 (July, 1928), 690-701.
18. "The Bush Building," 195.
19. Harvey Wiley Corbett, "New Stones for Old," The Saturday Evening Post 198 (Mar. 27, 1926), 7.

20. Several descriptions of the building commented on the innovativeness of the trompe l'oeil piers, including Harvey Wiley Corbett, "High Buildings on Narrow Streets," American Architect 119 (June 8, 1921), 603-08, 617-19; Mujica, Francesco, The History of the Skyscraper (1929; rpt. New York, 1977), 59. The building across the street at 113 West 42nd Street (NB 608-1925) echoes the use of colored brick patterning on the side elevations, as well as other features of the Bush Tower.
21. "The Bush Building," 195.
22. "This is the most recent, and last, of the skyscrapers..." "The New Bush Terminal Building," Architectural Journal 51 (Jan. 21, 1920), 78; "The new zoning law rang the death-knell of the skyscraper, and there will be no more of these castles in the air..." H.S. Gillespie, "The Bush Terminal Sales Building," Architecture 39 (Jan., 1919), 1.
23. "The Bush Building," 195.
24. Harvey Wiley Corbett, "New Stones for Old," The Saturday Evening Post 198 (May 15, 1926), 16-17.
25. Editor's note preceding Harvey Wiley Corbett, "The Influence of Zoning on New York's Skyline," The American Architect 123 (Jan. 3, 1923), 1.
26. Edwin Avery Park, New Backgrounds for a New Age. (New York, 1927), 148.
27. See "Two Recent Architectural Successes," Vanity Fair 9 (Nov., 1917), 69; H. S. Gillespie, "The Bush Terminal Sales Building," Architecture 39 (Jan., 1919), 1-4; "The New Bush Terminal Building," Architectural Journal 51 (Jan. 21, 1920), 77-81, 88-89; C. Matlack Price, "The Trend of Architectural Thought in America," The Century Magazine 102 (Sept., 1921), 712-13; C. Matlack Price, "Architecture," The New International Yearbook for the Year 1917, ed. Frank M. Colby (New York, 1918), 46; Orrick Johns, "What the Modish Building Will Wear," NYT Sunday Magazine, Oct. 4, 1925, 11, 21; Giles H. Edgell, The American Architecture of Today (New York, 1928), 362, 364; Sheldon Cheney, The New World Architecture (New York, 1930), 140.
28. "A Half Century of Progress in the Development of Distinctive Types of Buildings in the United States," American Architect 129 (Jan. 5, 1926), 93.
29. Talbot Hamlin, The American Spirit in Architecture (New York, 1926), 196.
30. H[arvey] W[iley] C[orbett], "Architecture," The Encyclopaedia Britannica. 13th ed., (Chicago, 1926), vol. 1, 199-206, Plate II.
31. Raymond Hood, "The American Radiator Building," American Architect 126 (Nov. 19, 1924), 472.
32. "Bush Terminal Sales Building," Architecture and Building 50 (Dec., 1918), plates 154-160.

33. Ibid.
34. The primary entrance to the movie theater was through 138 West 42nd Street, also owned by the Bush Terminal Company. The theater was known as the "Cameo" and later the "Bryant."
35. The Bush Terminal Company Annual Reports for Fiscal Years 1918-1938; New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, 3421-157, July 7, 1938; Stern, 277.

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 Bush Tower 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 Bush Tower, designed by the firm of Helmle & Corbett and built in 1916-1918 and added to in 1921, reflects an important intermediate stage in the development of the skyscraper, combining historical neo-Gothic detailing with a modern pronounced vertical emphasis; that although designed before the adoption of the 1916 zoning ordinance requiring setbacks and predicted to be one of the last of the skyscrapers, the Bush Tower was considered a building of the future rather than the past, as the termination of the tower, which Corbett termed a purely architectural and aesthetic solution, became a highly influential prototype for later set-back skyscraper designs; that conceived by Harvey Wiley Corbett, a major contributor to the evolution of skyscraper design, as a three-dimensional towering mass, the building illustrates his belief in the importance of a vertical emphasis in tall building design; that the design solution for the secondary elevations -- the use of trompe l'oeil colored brick piers -- was often imitated on tall buildings in New York City; that the Bush Tower is an important first example in the evolution of Helmle & Corbett's skyscrapers in Manhattan; that it was constructed for the Bush Terminal Company and was known originally as the Bush Terminal International Exhibit Building and Buyers Club which housed merchandise showrooms conveniently located for out-of-town buyers in mid-town Manhattan; that as one of the highest towers built on a plot of its size, the soaring, tower-like 450' tall building with few interior partitions required unusual engineering solutions; and that the two ten-story wings facing 41st Street, also designed by Helmle & Corbett, continue the restrained neo-Gothic style of the thirty-story tower and feature an unaltered street-level facade.

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 Bush Tower, 130-132 West 42nd Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 994, Lot 45 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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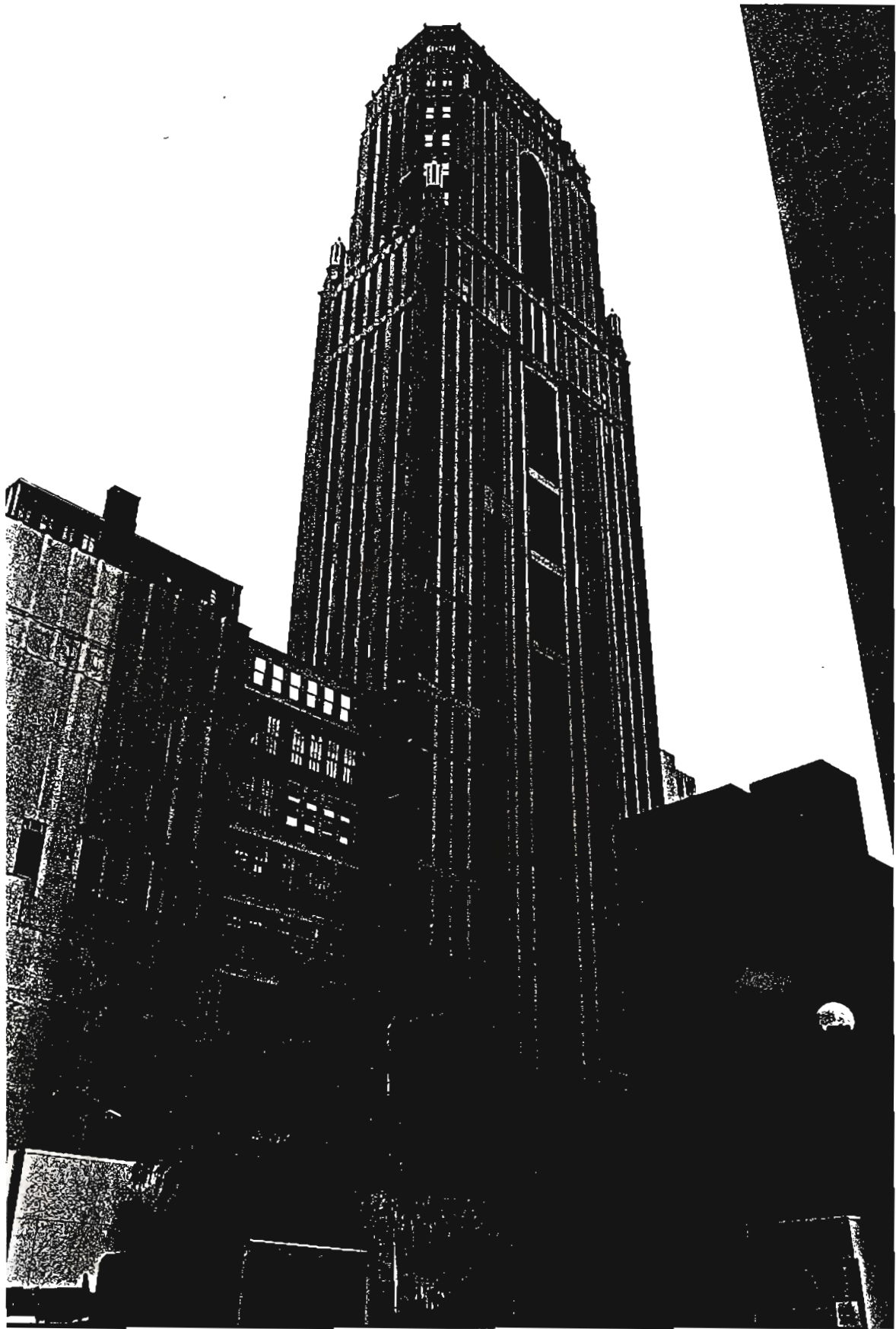
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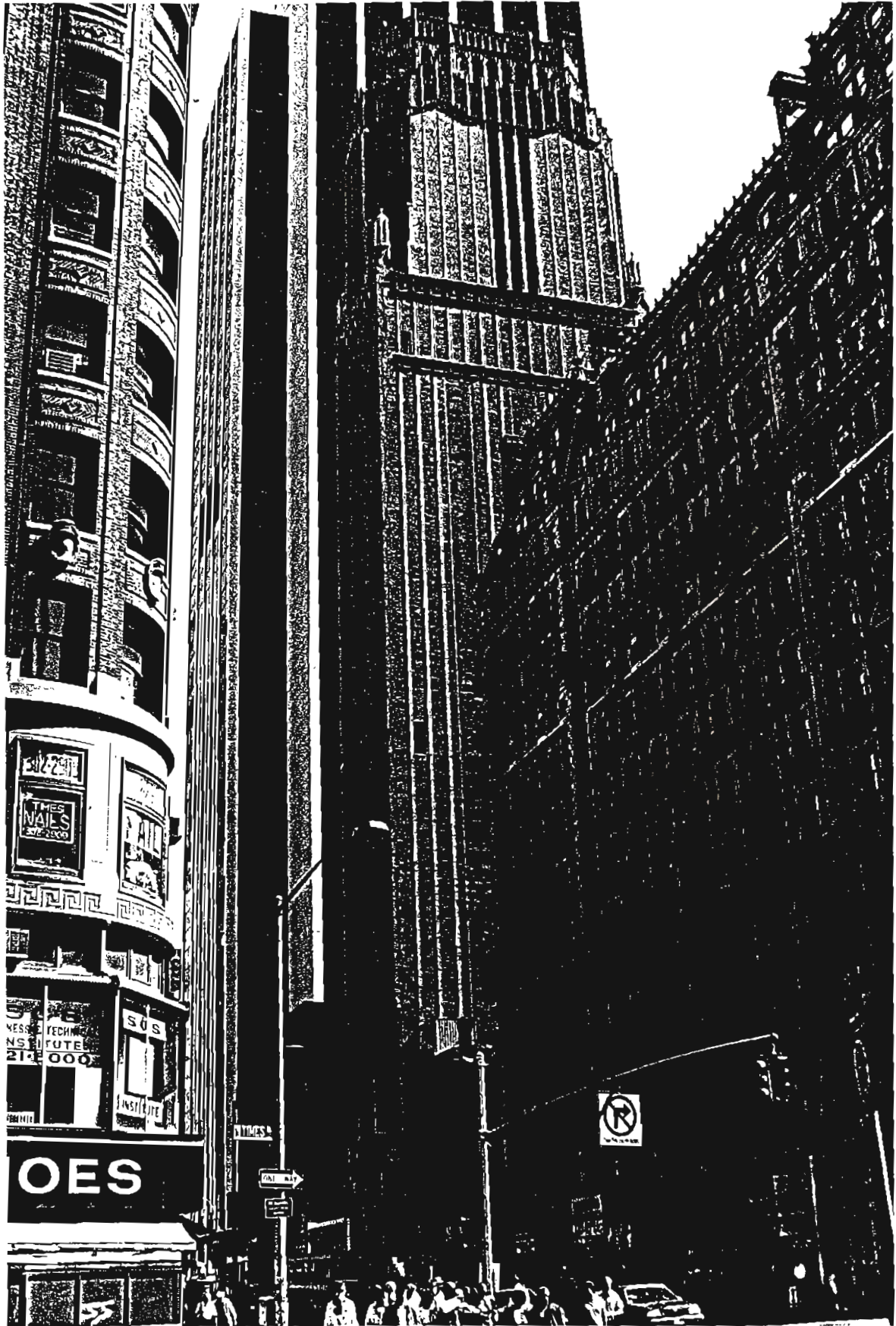
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The Bush Tower, 130-132 West 42nd Street and 133-137 West 41st Street
1916-1918, added to in 1921; Helmle & Corbett, Architects
42nd Street Facade



The Bush Tower, 130-132 West 42nd Street and 133-137 West 41st Street
1916-1918, added to in 1921; Helmle & Corbett, Architects
East Facade



The Bush Tower, 130-132 West 42nd Street and 133-137 West 41st Street
1916-1918, added to in 1921; Helmle & Corbett, Architects
West facade



The Bush Tower, 130-132 West 42nd Street and 133-137 West 41st Street
1916-1918, added to in 1921; Helmle & Corbett, Architects
41st Street Facade

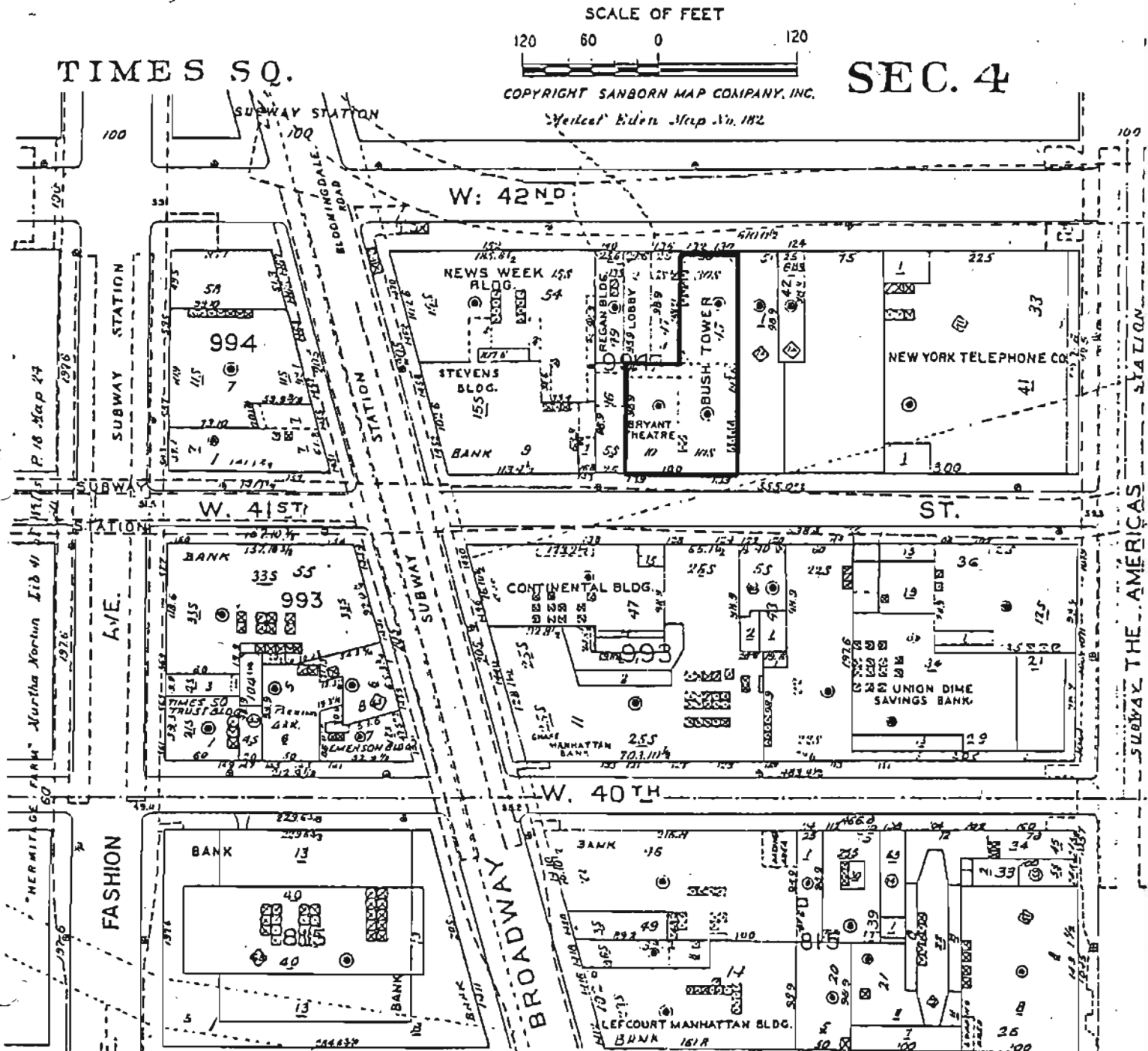


Unaltered Entrance at
137 West 41st Street

Detail,
Tower Setback



The Bush Tower, 130-132 West 42nd Street and 133-137 West 41st Street
1916-1918, added to in 1921; Helmle & Corbett, Architects



The Bush Tower, Landmark Site
 Graphic Source: Sanborn Manhattan Land Book, 1987-88