

STEWART & COMPANY BUILDING, 402-404 Fifth Avenue (aka 2 West 37th Street), Manhattan. Built 1914; [Whitney] Warren & [Charles D.] Wetmore, architects; George A. Fuller Co., builders; New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company, terra cotta manufacturer.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 838, Lot. 48

On October 18, 2005, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Stewart & Company building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Three people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the property's owners. In addition, the Commission received two letters in support of designation.

Summary

The Stewart & Company Building, designed by Warren and Wetmore, is one of the firm's most unusual designs. The 1914 building reflects the unusual combination of diverse influences such as the 18th century British neo-Classical movement and the late 19th century Chicago School of Architecture style. The blue and white ornament of the terra cotta cladding is reminiscent of the 18th century neo-Classical movement in England, and specifically two of the most important proponents of the movement, Josiah Wedgwood and Robert Adam. Characteristic of the Chicago style are steel frame construction, masonry cladding that was usually terra cotta, large areas of glazing, usually featuring tripartite windows known as Chicago windows, and a tripartite vertical design.

As the commercial center of Manhattan moved uptown so did the location of department stores. In the early 20th century, Fifth Avenue above 34th Street was being transformed from a residential to a commercial neighborhood. The construction of new store buildings, such as Tiffany and Company, Gorham, and the Stewart & Company Building, changed the residential appearance of this section of Fifth Avenue.

The building owner, Robert Walton Goelet, was a member of one of New York's oldest and wealthiest families, with real estate holdings said to have been second only to the Astor family. The firm of Warren & Wetmore, of which Goelet's uncle, Whitney Warren, was a principal, designed this and several other buildings for him in Manhattan. Warren & Wetmore was a highly successful and prolific architectural firm, best known for its designs for hotels and buildings commissioned by railroad companies.

The Stewart & Company Building reflects the work of two important New York City building related businesses. The builder, George A. Fuller Company, by 1900, had become a major force in the promotion and construction of tall office buildings in New York City. In the more than one hundred years since its founding, the Fuller Company has constructed thousands of buildings, in New York, throughout the country, and abroad.

The building's decorative terra cotta was manufactured by the New York Terra Cotta Company, New York City's only major terra cotta manufacturer. It supplied terra cotta for a host of prominent architects and numerous buildings. The Stewart & Company building is an exceptional example of decorative polychrome terra cotta and the work of the New York Terra Cotta Company.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Retail on Fifth Avenue¹

As the commercial center of Manhattan moved uptown so did the location of department stores. In the 1860s, the main location centered around Broadway between Canal and 14th Streets. By the 1880s, a new district had been formed between 14th and 23rd Streets, along Broadway (“Ladies’ Mile”) and along Sixth Avenue (“Fashion Row”). In the early 20th century, the movement was to Fifth Avenue above 34th Street, which was, at the time, a residential neighborhood. Initially former residences were converted to commercial uses so Fifth Avenue architecturally retained a residential appearance. In 1906, Tiffany and Company moved from Broadway and 15th Street to a new store building designed by McKim, Mead and White at 37th Street, Gorham Manufacturing Company moved from Broadway and 19th Street to a new store building, also designed by McKim, Mead & White, at 36th Street, and B. Altman Department Store moved from Broadway and 18th Street to a new store building designed by Trowbridge & Livingston at 34th Street (all New York City designated Landmarks). The construction of new store buildings, such as the Stewart & Company Building, changed the appearance of Fifth Avenue above 34th Street from residential to a street of grand commercial palaces. However, the Stewart & Company Building differed from the new department store buildings in its design, with its colorful, decorative terra cotta cladding, and in its use, with retail at the ground floor and commercial lofts above. Although this part of Fifth Avenue remained a commercial center, beginning in the 1920s, some retailers moved farther north on Fifth Avenue between 50th and 59th Streets, including Stewart & Company in 1928 and Mark Cross in 1935.

The Owner: Robert Walton Goelet²

Robert Walton Goelet (1880-1941) was a member of one of New York’s oldest and wealthiest families. His grandfather, Robert Goelet, was one of the founding members of Chemical Bank and Trust Company, and his father, also named Robert Goelet, was known as a clubman and yachtsman and a director of banks and other corporations. His mother, Harriette Louise Warren was a daughter of George Henry Warren, Jr., a wealthy and influential corporate lawyer in New York. Whitney Warren, the architect, was one of her brothers. Robert Walton Goelet was educated at Harvard University. In 1921, he married Anne Guestier of Bordeaux, France.

The Goelet family acquired vast amounts of real estate in Manhattan over several generations and was said to have holdings second only to the Astor family.³ The real estate property owned by Goelet’s father and uncle, Robert and Ogden, was divided between their estates. Robert Walton Goelet was the sole surviving heir to his father’s extensive real estate holdings. In addition, he also added to his real estate holdings by acquiring additional properties.

Warren & Wetmore designed several other buildings for him and the Goelet Realty Co., including the Ritz-Carlton Hotel at Madison Avenue between 46th and 47th Street (1908, demolished), 8-14 East 47th Street (1912), 79 Madison Avenue (1914), and 34-36 East 51st Street (1915, demolished). While many of his large commissions were designed by Warren & Wetmore, Goelet retained other architectural firms to design a 12 story store and office building at 114-118 West 39th Street (1904, Schickel & Ditmars, demolished), a 16 story hotel at 1240 Broadway (1918, Albert Morton Gray, demolished) and a 14 story apartment building at 437-439 East 56th Street aka 14 Sutton Place South (1929, Rosario Candela).⁴

The property at 402-404 Fifth Avenue was acquired by his father and uncle, Robert and Ogden Goelet, by two deeds, one dated March 10, 1886 from the Executors of the Estate of Montague M. Hendricks and the other dated June 2, 1891 from Thomas Scott. After his death in 1941, the executors and trustees of his estate and his widow, by separate deeds, conveyed this property and many others of his real estate holdings to the Rhode Island Corporation, a corporation controlled by the Goelet family.⁵

The Architects: Warren & Wetmore⁶

Whitney Warren (1864-1943), born in New York City, studied architectural drawing privately, attended Columbia College for a time, and continued his studies at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts

in Paris from 1885 to 1894. Upon his return to New York, he worked in the office of McKim, Mead & White. One of Warren's country house clients was Charles Delavan Wetmore. Born in Elmira, New York, Wetmore (1866-1941) was a graduate of Harvard University (1889) and Harvard Law School (1892), who had also studied architecture and had designed three dormitory buildings (c.1890) before joining a law firm. Impressed by his client's architectural ability, Warren persuaded Wetmore to leave law and to establish Warren & Wetmore in 1898. While Warren was the principal designer of the firm and used his social connections to provide it with clients, Wetmore became the legal and financial specialist.

Warren & Wetmore became a highly successful and prolific architectural firm, best known for its designs for hotels and buildings commissioned by railroad companies. The firm's work was concentrated in New York during the first three decades of the twentieth century, but it also executed projects across the United States and overseas. The designs were mainly variations of the neo-Classical idiom, including essays in the Beaux-Arts and neo-Renaissance styles. Warren & Wetmore's first major commission, the result of a competition, was the flamboyant New York Yacht Club (1899-1900, a designated New York City Landmark). The firm was responsible for the design of the Chelsea Piers (1902-10, demolished), along the Hudson River between Little West 12th Street and West 23rd Streets; the Vanderbilt Hotel (1910-13, a designated interior New York City landmark); and a number of luxury apartment houses, such as 903 Park Avenue (1912).

Warren & Wetmore is most notably associated with the design of Grand Central Terminal (1903-13 with Reed & Stem and William J. Wilgus, engineer, a designated exterior and interior New York City Landmark), as well as a number of other projects in its vicinity. Whitney Warren was the cousin of William K. Vanderbilt, chairman of the board of the New York Central Railroad, who was responsible for the firm's selection as chief designers. Nearby development by the firm over the span of two decades included: Hotel Belmont (1905-06, demolished); Biltmore Hotel (1912-14, significantly altered); Commodore Hotel (1916-19, significantly altered); Hotel Ambassador (1921, demolished); and New York Central Building (1927-29, a designated New York City Landmark). The firm's later work displayed an increased interest in the "composition of architectural mass." The Heckscher Building (1920-21); Steinway Hall (1924-25, a designated New York City Landmark); Aeolian Building (1925-27, a designated New York City Landmark); and Consolidated Edison Co. Building Tower (1926), in particular, show the firm's success in its use of setbacks and picturesque towers. Little was constructed by the firm after 1930. Whitney Warren retired from Warren & Wetmore in 1931, but remained a consulting architect. Charles Wetmore was the firm's senior partner until the end of his life.

The Builder: George A. Fuller Co.⁷

The George A. Fuller Company was founded in Chicago in 1882 by George Allon Fuller (1851-1900). Fuller was trained as an architect at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and started his career as a draftsman in the office of Peabody & Sterns in Boston, becoming a partner by age 35. His early work included the design and the supervision of construction of the Union League Club in New York. Fuller quickly realized he was more interested in the construction phase of building and started his own contracting firm. From 1880-1882 he was a partner in the firm of Clark & Fuller, building the Union Club and the Chicago Opera House in Chicago. Staying in that city he formed his own company in 1882, one of his first jobs being the Pontiac Building. The George A. Fuller Company built one of the first completely steel-framed skyscrapers, the Tacoma Building in 1887, also in Chicago. Fuller was instrumental in differentiating the contractor's role from that of the designer, and, breaking with common practice, provided only construction services rather than both design and construction services. Fuller's extensive knowledge of construction and his interest in the new technology being developed for high rise buildings gained his company a reputation as a premier skyscraper builder. He used electric hoists and new methods of steel fastening and he pioneered a team approach to tall building construction which was adapted throughout the country.

After Fuller's death in 1900, at the age of 49, his son-in-law Harry S. Black became head of the Fuller Company. With the company's operations now in New York, Black became a major force in the promotion and construction of tall office buildings in this city. Black established a real estate

venture, the United States Realty and Improvement Company, to plan, finance and build in New York. The Fuller Construction Company was, for a time, a subsidiary of U. S. Realty, handling the construction work for the speculative building of its parent company.

In the more than one hundred years since its founding, the Fuller Company has constructed thousands of buildings, in New York, throughout the country, and abroad. The company's work in New York includes the old Pennsylvania Station (1902-11, McKim, Mead & White, demolished), the U. S. General Post Office (1908-13, McKim, Mead & White, a designated New York City landmark), the Plaza Hotel (1905-07, Henry J. Hardenbergh, addition 1921, Warren & Wetmore, a designated exterior and interior New York City Landmark), the United Nations Headquarters (1947-53, an international committee of architects, Wallace K. Harrison, chair), Lever House (1950-52, Skidmore, Owning & Merrill, a designated New York City landmark) and the Seagram Building (1955-58, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe with Philip Johnson and Kahn & Jacobs, a designated exterior and interior New York City landmark).

The Manufacture and Use of Architectural Terra Cotta⁸

Terra cotta, meaning "baked earth", is a term that has been used loosely since ancient Roman times to refer to glazed or unglazed ceramic ware intended primarily for architectural elements, large statuary, garden ornaments, and furniture. Employed in ancient Greece, Italy and Egypt, the architectural use of the material was abandoned after the fall of Rome and not revived in Europe until the fourteenth century. Polychrome glazing techniques were developed in fifteenth-century Italy. Brilliantly colored, glazed terra cotta came to be known as "faience" after the Italian town of Faenza.⁹ At first Americans imported ornamental tiles from Europe, but by about 1845 wall and paving tiles were being made in Philadelphia, and by the late 19th century ceramic tile and architectural terra cotta were being produced in New York City and nearby New Jersey.

During the 1850s prominent New York architects Richard Upjohn and James Renwick, Jr., began experimenting with terra cotta elements on the exterior of buildings, but were hampered by the unreliable manufacture of the material and by opposition from stonecutters and masons. Renewed interest in terra cotta among New York builders in the last quarter of the century occurred as the public became increasingly tolerant of the material, as American manufacturers made it more available and less expensive, and as concerns increased about fireproofing buildings. Among New York's best-known terra-cotta-clad buildings which survive from that era are the Long Island (now Brooklyn) Historical Society Building (1878-81, George B. Post), the Bayard-Condict Building (1897-99, Louis Sullivan with Lydon P. Smith), the Potter Building (1882-84, Norris G. Starkweather) and the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Building (1892, Francis H. Kimball) in Long Island City, all designated New York City Landmarks.

The early years of the twentieth century brought about significant changes in the terra cotta industry. The popularity of the material continued to rise; between 1900 and 1912 its production quadrupled. The increased presence and improved technologies of the tile, terra cotta and pottery industries during this period promoted polychromatic glazed terra cotta which was popularized in New York by such projects as the Madison Square Presbyterian Church (1903-06, McKim, Mead & White, demolished), as well as the Beaver Building (1903-04, Clinton & Russell), the Gainsborough Studios (1907-08, Charles W. Buckham) and the Woolworth Building (1910-13, Cass Gilbert), all designated New York City Landmarks. However, while polychromatic terra cotta was used on some buildings built during the first two decades of the twentieth century, monochromatic and subtle shades, hues resembling stone and "discreet" use of color were the general rules regarding the use of terra cotta in New York until the 1920s.¹⁰ The Stewart & Company Building is one of a handful of unusual examples of vividly colored terra cotta buildings from this period and is comparable to the Beaver Building (1903-1904, Clinton & Russell, a designated New York City Landmark), St. Aloysius Church (1902, William W. Renwick), Brooklyn Academy of Music (1908, Herts & Tallant, located within the Brooklyn Academy of Music Historic District), St. Ambrose Church, Brooklyn (1905-06, George H. Streeton) and the Brooklyn Masonic Temple (1906, Lord & Hewitt, located within the Fort Greene Historic District).

The Terra Cotta Manufacturer: New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company¹¹

The New York Terra Cotta Company was established in 1886 by New York real estate magnate Orlando B. Potter, with his son-in-law, attorney Walter Geer. It was New York City's only major terra cotta manufacturer and supplied terra cotta for a host of prominent architects and numerous buildings. By 1891, the company had filed contracts in fifteen states as well as Canada. Among the New York projects for which the company supplied terra cotta were: the Lincoln Building (1886, R. H. Robertson, a designated New York City Landmark); the Corbin Building (1888, Francis H. Kimball); the Schermerhorn Building (1889, Henry J. Hardenburgh, a designated New York City Landmark); the Old Grolier Club (1890, Charles W. Romeyn, a designated New York City Landmark); the Montauk Club (1891, Francis H. Kimball, located within the Park Slope Historic District); Carnegie Hall (1891, William B. Tuthill, a designated New York City Landmark); and the Ansonia Hotel (1904, Paul E. M. Duboy, a designated New York City Landmark).

The Stewart & Company Building was built during the height of The New York Terra Cotta Company's business. The complex decoration of its terra cotta cladding shows the ornament and color potential of the material. By 1915 the company was the fourth largest employer in Long Island City. The terra cotta company's business prospered in the 1920s when it acquired a second manufacturing site in Old Bridge, New Jersey, allowing for direct access to clay deposits. Walter Geer, Jr., the son of Walter Geer, continued the family involvement until it went bankrupt in 1928-29. Richard Dalton, who had been president of the company from 1919 to 1928, formed the Eastern Terra Cotta Company in 1931. This company, combining the facilities of the New York and New Jersey companies, produced architectural terra cotta for New York's recreational facilities under the administration of Robert Moses and his architect Aymar Embury II in the 1930s. Business continued until the mid-1940s.

Design and Construction¹²

A 1911 photograph shows three buildings occupying the site of the current building.¹³ The three demolished commercial buildings were built in 1889-1890 and then enlarged and altered in 1891-1892 according to the designs of McKim, Mead & White for Robert and Ogden Goelet, the father and uncle of Robert Walton Goelet.¹⁴ It was used as a hotel and boarding house, and after the 1891 alteration, as a banquet hall for the noted catering firm, Sherry's.

The existing commercial building has retail at the ground floor and lofts above and was constructed in 1914 according to the designs of Warren & Wetmore for Robert Walton Goelet. It was built between July 8, 1914 and December 28, 1914 for an estimated cost of \$250,000.00.¹⁵ The builder was George A. Fuller & Company¹⁶ and the architectural terra cotta was manufactured by the New York Terra Cotta Company.¹⁷ A New York Times article that appeared on May 10, 1914 described the proposed building as having black and white marble columns between large windows on the two lower floors with black and white tinted terra cotta above.¹⁸ The upper floors of this eight-story building have large tripartite windows and instead of the black and white terra cotta described in the newspaper, its structural frame is clad with decorative blue and white terra cotta.

The design of the building reflects the unusual combination of diverse influences such as the 18th century British neo-Classical movement and the late 19th century Chicago School of Architecture style.

The style known as the Chicago School of Architecture developed in the 1880s in Chicago and continued to be popular until the early 20th century. It coincided with the development of steel skeletal construction and the skyscraper. Characteristic of the style are steel frame construction, masonry cladding that was usually terra cotta, minimal use of ornament, large areas of glazing, usually featuring tripartite windows known as Chicago windows, and a tripartite vertical design reminiscent of a classical column consisting of a base, shaft and capital. The configuration of Chicago windows is a large central fixed single-pane flanked by two narrower one-over-one double-hung windows. Examples of buildings built in this style are the Reliance Building (1894-95, D. H. Burnham and Company), Carson Pirie Scott Store (1899, 1904-04, Louis Sullivan, D. H. Burnham and Company) and Chicago Building (1904, Holabird and Roche), all located in Chicago.¹⁹ The Stewart & Company building is constructed with a steel frame and has terra cotta masonry cladding over the

steel frame, large tripartite windows and a tripartite vertical design. However, it does have some features that depart from the characteristics of the Chicago style. The building has an elaborate use of ornament in its terra cotta cladding and its decorative elements and use of the colors blue and white are highly unusual. Its tripartite windows at the upper floors consists of three single-pane windows and three single-pane transom windows and therefore have a different configuration than the tripartite Chicago window. In addition, stringcourses above the fifth and seventh floors add horizontal elements not usually seen in buildings built in the Chicago style.

The blue and white decorative terra cotta at the exterior is highly unusual. While the color combination of blue and white is used in pottery, it is rarely used in architectural terra cotta. The ornament of the terra cotta cladding is reminiscent of the 18th century neo-Classical movement in England, and specifically two of the most important proponents of the movement, Josiah Wedgwood and Robert Adam.²⁰ The delicate white relief on a blue background seen in the terra cotta cladding is reminiscent of the blue jasper ware pottery developed and popularized by Josiah Wedgwood in England during the 18th century. Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795) was an English potter who was born into a family of a long line of potters. In 1758 he set up his own pottery business in Burslem, England. His cream colored earthenware became known as Queen's ware after Queen Charlotte appointed him royal supplier of dinnerware in 1762. In 1768 he built a second factory at Etruria near Stoke-on-Trent. Wedgwood experimented with colored earthenware and developed basalt ware, a black stoneware, and jasper ware, colored stoneware that could be made in a variety of colors. Wedgwood's jasper ware, which was characteristically blue, had fine, delicate relief figures in white that were inspired by classical art. A variety of products were made from jasper ware, including vases, tea and tableware, cameos for jewelry, and plaques for chimney pieces, furniture and wall decoration. Many of these reliefs were designed for Wedgwood by John Flaxman, a sculptor and modeler. Wedgwood pottery was extremely popular in the 18th century and is still produced today by descendants of Josiah Wedgwood.²¹ Many of the decorative elements found at the Stewart & Company Building, including flower and leaf motifs, acanthus leaves, bundled reed and banding with crisscross ties, ribbons, egg, and bead borders, are also found on jasper ware pieces made by Wedgwood.

Josiah Wedgwood and his contemporary, Robert Adam, the 18th century British architect and interior decorator, were important proponents of the neo-Classical movement and both used several of the same classical sources in their pottery and interior decoration, respectively.²² They were not only aware of each others' work, but even worked together on occasion, such as when Wedgwood produced a basalt plaque for a chimney piece according to the design of Adam in 1772.²³

Robert Adam (1728-1792) was the most well-known of four architect brothers, John, Robert, James and William. Their father William was a prominent Scottish architect. Robert went on a grand tour of the continent from 1754-58 visiting Italy and Spalato (now Split, Croatia) where he studied the remains of the Diocletian Palace. When he returned to England he started his own practice. His younger brother James (1732-94) joined him in 1763 after returning from his grand tour of Italy. At the time Robert set up his practice, the Palladian revival movement, based on the principles of 16th century Italian architect, Andrea Palladio, was fashionable in England. Robert Adam was a proponent of a neo-Classical style of architect and decoration, which he popularized in England. The neo-Classical style was less heavy and restrictive than the Palladian revival style. It was characterized by lighter, flatter decoration with classically inspired elements that were graceful and elegant.²⁴ Many of the decorative elements found at the Stewart & Company Building, such as vases, floral and leaf motifs, dentils, acanthus leaves, bundled reed and banding, ribbons, egg, and bead borders, can be found in Adam's interior decoration.

The architectural office of Warren & Wetmore developed a successful formula in the 1900s and 1910s that it employed for its many luxurious hotel and apartment house designs: tall masonry blocks with three or four stories at the top and bottom articulated in a restrained classical vocabulary. Influenced by the work of Robert Adam, the firm's design for the Ritz-Carlton Hotel (1910, demolished) established an influential standard called "Ritz Hotel Adam," characterized by delicate reliefs set against broad, smooth surfaces.²⁵ The ballroom and other interior rooms at the Ritz-Carlton were designed in the Adam style. When the ballroom was opened in 1912, Whitney Warren gave a

dance for 350 guests. The New York Times described the ballroom as being decorated in the Adam style throughout and having walls of soft gray decorated with Wedgwood plaques, and pilasters supporting a frieze interspersed with Wedgwood designs. The draperies are described as blue and the chairs gray.²⁶ The Adam and Wedgwood inspired decoration seen in the Ritz-Carlton interiors continued to be used by Warren & Wetmore in the exterior design of the Stewart & Company Building. Built soon after the Ritz-Carlton is the Vanderbilt Hotel where Warren & Wetmore's design of the Della Robbia Bar survives as an example of a ceramic and terra cotta hotel interior that was once-fashionable. Similar to the Della Robbia Bar, the Stewart & Company Building makes an extensive and exuberant use of terra cotta. While Warren & Wetmore had previously used neo-Classical sources for their work, the extensive use of polychrome, low relief decoration of classically inspired motifs over the structural frame makes the Stewart & Company Building a unique example in the firm's oeuvre.

Subsequent History

The building originally had two retail tenants at the ground floor, Stewart & Company and Mark Cross. Stewart & Company, a department store and operator of an international mail order business, occupied the southern storefront on Fifth Avenue and Mark Cross, a manufacturer and retailer of high quality leather goods, occupied the northern corner storefront. Stewart & Company had occupied the previous building on the site since it opened for business in 1912²⁷ and Mark Cross moved to the location from its previous place of business at 210 Fifth Avenue.²⁸ (Stewart & Company should not be confused with A. T. Stewart & Company Department Store). Stewart & Company merged with Arnold Constable in 1925 and moved out in 1928 to a temporary location until their new building, also designed by Warren & Wetmore, at Fifth Avenue and 56th Street was completed in 1929 (demolished).²⁹ They went out of business soon thereafter in 1930 and Bonwit Teller took over the 56th Street building.³⁰ Emily Shops, a woman's clothing store, moved in the Stewart and Company space and remained until the 1950s.³¹ Mark Cross remained in the building until 1935 when they, too, moved uptown to Fifth Avenue and 52nd Street.³²

The commercial tenants who have occupied the building include individuals and companies in industries as diverse as watches, clothing, importing, photography, jewelry, publishing, tires and rubber, legal, real estate, beauty, fitness, dentistry, banking and squash and racquet clubs. The current tenant in the northern corner storefront is North Fork Bank. The other current tenants at the ground floor are Comp U Photo and Oasis (hats, T-shirts and souvenirs) at the two southernmost bays on Fifth Avenue and Verizon Wireless at the sixth to eighth westernmost bays on West 37th Street.

Several well-known companies have occupied the upper floors including Gage Brothers & Co., a Chicago based millinery (from 1914³³ to the early 1950s); Wittnauer, a watch manufacturer, (from 1928, remaining almost 20 years before moving to 580 5th Avenue);³⁴ Longines Watch Company (mid-1930s); Swank, a jewelry manufacturer, (1940s to mid-1960s); Conde Nast Publication (mid-1940s) and Ballantine Books (mid-1950s).³⁵

The Rhode Island Corporation held the property for 25 years and then conveyed it to Robert R. Zeiller by deed dated April 28, 1976. The ownership of the property changed a number of times and was held for the longest period by H & H Associates from 1979 to 1986. The current owner, 404 Fifth LLC, has held the property since 1998. There was a transfer of development rights by a Zoning Lot Agreement and Grant of Easements dated May 5, 1988 by then current owner, Manhattan Realty Acquisition Fund to Tower Fifth Avenue Limited Partnership for a new building at 398-400 Fifth Avenue.³⁶

Description

This eight-story store and loft building designed by Warren & Wetmore has 65 feet 4 inch frontage on Fifth Avenue and 141 feet 6 inch frontage on West 37th Street. The building has a projecting L at the southwest corner of the building that appears to house mechanical equipment. Its terra cotta cladding is remarkably intact.

Ground Floor of the Fifth Avenue and West 37th Street Facades. The original storefronts of the building were located at the ground floor on Fifth Avenue and the first three bays on West 37th Street.

These storefronts were replaced around 1936³⁷ and have modern storefront infill at the present time. A photograph taken on October 3, 1914³⁸ shows that the storefronts on Fifth Avenue and the first three bays of West 37th Street featured large metal and glass display windows, light colored stone bulkheads and large transoms. There were three recessed doors on Fifth Avenue with metal canopies above. In the large transoms were three narrow single-pane windows set vertically. The top row of windows had operable horizontal pivot windows, but the middle and lower windows appear to have been inoperable. The ground floor was clad in a dark colored material, which was described as being black marble in an article that appeared on May 10, 1914 in The New York Times.³⁹ The remaining six bays at the ground floor of the West 37th Street façade had a stone bulkhead and two metal canopies, a larger one at the fifth bay and a smaller one at the ninth and westernmost bay. All five original metal canopies were removed prior to 1940.⁴⁰ The two shell-shaped canopy attachments remain in the spandrel between the first and second floor at the fifth bay on the West 37th Street facade. The ground floor infill at the six westernmost bays on West 37th Street cannot be seen in the October 1914 photograph except for the light colored stone bulkhead that becomes gradually higher at the westernmost end of the building and light colored stairs leading to an entrance underneath the large canopy at the fifth bay. These six westernmost bays had Chicago windows above in what may have been a mezzanine above the ground floor.

The ground floor cladding which was a dark color when the building was built was re-clad or covered with light colored stucco sometime between 1940 and the late 1970s.⁴¹ The existing cladding has a rope detail at the three street façade corners that is similar to the rope detail above in the upper floors. In the October 1914 photograph, a rope detail can be seen at the corner pier of the building in the original dark cladding. At the corner pier the number “404” has been pin-mounted at the second floor on both the Fifth Avenue and West 37th Street sides, this occurred sometime after 1939. At the Fifth Avenue façade of the corner storefront and the first five bays on West 37th Street, an additional stone slab matching the color of the stone bulkhead has been set above the bulkhead making the bulkhead taller than it originally was. The stone bulkhead at these bays are not identical to the stone bulkheads at the sixth, seventh bays and eighth bays. The existing stone bulkhead at the sixth and seventh bays may be original.

The existing southernmost storefront occupies one bay. The infill consists of modern metal and glass display windows with a grayish green stone bulkhead and a recessed metal and glass door. The pier and the transom area above are clad with black metal. The signage above the storefront consists of large pin-mounted red letters (“Comp U Photo”). There is a banner sign attached to the pier. The existing storefront at the second southernmost bay has modern metal and glass display windows with a black stone bulkhead and a recessed metal and glass door. The signage above the storefront has large lettering and graphics on a black and white background with additional signage below having a red background and black lettering. There are metal louvers set flush just above the signage within the transom area and three neon signs located behind the display windows. This storefront is currently occupied by Oasis. The corner storefront has light colored stone cladding at the bulkhead. The infill consists of metal and glass display windows and a metal and glass door. The signage on Fifth Avenue and at each of the three bays on West 37th Street has white pin-mounted lettering (“North Fork”) on a black background and a yellow and green graphic logo. There are two wall mounted white lights above each of the three bays at West 37th Street. At the corner pier there is a mounted metal plaque with the bank’s logo on each facade.

The fourth and fifth bays at West 37th Street are part of the North Fork Bank and have metal and glass single-pane tripartite windows with a stone bulkhead. The sixth through eighth bays are now a storefront that is presently occupied by Verizon. These bays have metal and glass display windows and a recessed metal and glass door in the sixth bay and a light colored stone bulkhead. Signage for the store is located on three vinyl canopies, one banner sign and neon lights located behind the display windows. The westernmost bay, which is the ninth bay, of the West 37th Street facade has black stone cladding and contains recessed glass and metal double-leaf entrance doors and glass and metal double-leaf service doors. The windows located above the fourth to ninth bays have been replaced by dark colored metal louvers. There is a banner with signage (“404 Fifth Avenue”) at

the westernmost pier of the building at West 37th Street. A plaque on the easternmost pier of the last bay lists the names of current tenants.

Second Floor of the Fifth Avenue and West 37th Street Facades. The second floor of the Fifth Avenue façade and the first three bays of the West 37th Street facades originally had large single-pane windows with tripartite, dark, solid transoms above. In the spandrels below these windows are the original dark inset panels and decorative metal cresting. Below the cresting is a band with an overall pattern of diamonds and inset flowers. The configuration of these windows has not been altered except that some of the panels in the transom have been replaced by louvers. At the six westernmost bays on West 37th Street the original windows were single-pane tripartite windows with tripartite single-pane horizontal pivot windows in the transom. Below were dark colored panels. These windows have been replaced by Chicago windows with tripartite solid panel transoms.

The Upper Floors of the Fifth Avenue and West 37th Street Facades. There is a uniform treatment above the second floors at the two primary street facades. The windows were originally large tripartite single-pane windows with tripartite single-pane windows in the transoms. The center window appears to have been a fixed panel that was flanked on either side by casement windows. The windows in the transoms were horizontal pivot windows. All the windows are identical except that the top floor windows are taller than the lower floor windows. Three original windows remain at the three southernmost bays of the eighth floor at the Fifth Avenue façade and one original window remains at the westernmost bay of the eighth floor at the West 37th Street façade. In addition, at the westernmost bay of sixth floor at the West 37th Street façade, the glazing has been replaced by louvers but the original window frame remains. All the other windows at the upper floors have been replaced with new dark, metal windows having large, flat panning. All windows at the third through seventh floors that have been replaced are presently Chicago windows with tripartite single-pane windows or metal panels in the transoms. At the eighth floor, all the windows that have been replaced are presently Chicago windows set below tripartite single-pane windows with tripartite single-pane windows above in the transom.

A light colored masonry cornice with dentils below runs between the second and third floors. The existing cornice appears to have the same profile as the cornice seen in the October 1914 photograph; however, the cornice in the historic photograph was light colored at the top and a dark color at the bottom. Above this cornice, the structural frame of the building is clad with blue and white terra cotta that has elaborate ornamentation. The horizontal spandrels between the third and fourth floors, fourth and fifth floors, and sixth and seventh floors have an all-over design of small squares with in-set floriated motifs. The squares have a blue background and the flowers are white. The flowers in the spandrels between the third and fourth floors, and sixth and seventh floors are identical and have four broad petals. The flowers in the spandrels between the fourth and fifth floors are round with many slender petals. Above and below the squares are bands with roundels alternating with round and floral designs with a square having an in-set flower placed wherever there is a mullion above and below. In these bands, the background of the squares and the center of the flowers and the round designs are blue while the flowers and round design are white.

There are two identical stringcourses between the fifth and sixth floors and the seventh and eighth floors consisting of a center band with a blue background and repeating motif of laurel branch wreaths and ribbons. Above and below this motif are an oval beaded border and a band of white terra cotta and then a motif consisting of a bundle of reeds with blue crisscross ties and a white round circle. The crisscross ties appear above and beneath each mullion and at the middle of each center window.

The laurel branch wreaths and bundled reeds motifs are repeated above the eighth floor just below the cornice. At the frieze underneath the cornice are acanthus leaf shaped brackets alternating with blue panels having a raised white flower. There are three different flower designs that alternate with a sunflower, a pinwheel flower and a leaf-like flower. Within each square is an oval beaded border. The horizontal elements of the brackets are rectangular in shape and have square flowers at the projecting end. All of these flowers are identical. There are white swags that wrap around the leaf-shaped bracket and connect to the rectangular element above. Underneath the cornice between the brackets, are panels with a blue background and a white relief of two laurel branches and ribbons.

The cornice consists of a band of white terra cotta with a flat blue design of rectangular shapes that are slightly arched at the top. Above each bracket in this band is a white flower in relief. Above this band is an alternating motif of a white simplified acanthus leaf and flower bud on a long stem against a blue background.

Running vertically between each window bay of the Fifth Avenue between the third and fifth floors, the sixth and seventh floors and at the eighth floor are pilasters. These pilasters have white rectangular-shaped angular base with an egg design against a blue background above. The shaft are bundled reeds with blue crisscross ties having a white round circle, which are located in the middle of each window at the third through seventh floors, at each spandrel, and twice at the taller eighth floor windows. The bundled reeds also have a white band with small blue rectangles that appear at the top and bottom of each horizontal spandrel. The capital is a white simplified acanthus leaf against a blue background with a white, thin rectangular slab above.

At the corners of the primary street facades, also running between the third and fifth floors, the sixth and seventh floors and at the eighth floor are the same bundled reed pilasters seen between the window bays on Fifth Avenue and blue panels with low white relief set in-between. At the bottom of these panels is an urn with a swag of draped fabric sitting on a base with a leaf design. At the top of the urn is a ribbon in a bow. Above this a laurel branch and ribbon motif with an oval beaded border, identical to that seen at the stringcourses, that proceeds vertically to the next stringcourse or cornice. Above this running design in the stringcourse is a square design having a circle made of laurel branches. The same motifs of the bundled reeds and the urn and leaf design are seen between the window bays at the West 37th Street façade.

At the three corners of the street facades, are white rope motifs against a blue background running from the third floor to the cornice. At the second floor cornice and the fifth and seventh floor stringcourses, the rope motif sits on a white rectangular-shaped squared-off base.

South Façade. The secondary south façade is visible from the south above the adjacent lot, which is vacant at this time. The façade is constructed of white brick and has single-punched window openings. Many of these openings have historic three-over-three double-hung windows and some of window openings have been bricked in. An outline in red brick of the adjacent five-story building that is seen in the 1911 photograph is visible. An outline in white of the six-story building that replaced it in 1916-17⁴² can also be seen. At the fifth through eighth floors at the first two window bays, there are horizontal and vertical decorative blue and white terra cotta bands that correspond to the terra cotta cladding on the street facades. The projecting decorative terra cotta cornice of the street façades wraps around the corner and continues until the end of the second bay of windows. Beyond the projecting cornice and continuing the whole length of the south façade at the roof line is decorative blue and white terra cotta. The pattern has a band with three white rectangular bars alternating with a round flower against a blue background. Above this motif are two lines of white tiles and a line of blue tiles set horizontally. Below this motif are two narrow lines of white tiles with a narrow line of light blue tiles set in between, then a line of large blue tiles, and another narrow line of white and a narrow line of light blue tiles. Set in the line of large blue tiles, beneath every third set of three rectangular bars are two rectangular bars. A bulkhead clad with white tile and brick is visible at the roof. Projecting south at western end of this façade is a full height “L” that appears to house mechanical equipment.

West Façade. The secondary west façade is visible from the west over the adjacent six-story building. The façade is clad in white brick. The projecting cornice of the street façades does not continue on west façade as it does not the south façade. The decorative blue and white terra cotta pattern seen at the south façade at the roof line is repeated on the west façade, except that the only rectangular bars set in the blue tiles below the bar and flower motif are two bars in the middle of the façade. A vertical band of decorative terra cotta repeats the same pattern as the end pier of the West 37th Street façade. A bulkhead clad in white tile and brick is visible at the roof.

Report prepared by
Cynthia Danza
Research Department

NOTES

¹ This section is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *B. Altman & Company Department Store Building Designation Report* (LP-1274) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1985), prepared by Sarah Williams; LPC, *Former Tiffany Building Designation Report* (LP-1624) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1988), prepared by James T. Dillon; and LPC, *Gorham Building Designation Report* (LP-2027) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1998), prepared by Kerry Ehlinger, Gale Harris and Marjorie Pearson.

² “Death of Robert Goelet,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1899, p. 7; “Death of Robert Goelet,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1899, p. 6; “Mrs. Robert Goelet Dies in Paris Home,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1912, p. 11; “Robert W. Goelet Dies in Home at 61,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1941, p. 15; *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 35 (New York: James T. White & Company, 1949), 416-417.

³ Brooks Peters, “The Goelets: A Landmark New York Family,” *Quest* (March 1989): 40-45.

⁴ New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Application Docket.

⁵ New York County, Office of the Registrar, Deeds and Conveyances; “Manhattan Transfers,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1943, p. 35.

⁶ This section is based on LPC, *Aeolian Building Designation Report* (LP-2125) (N.Y.: City of New York, 2002), prepared by Jay Shockley.

⁷ This section is based on LPC, *Fuller Building Designation Report* (LP-1460) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1986).

⁸ This section is based on LPC, *(Former) Della Robbia Bar (aka The “Crypt,” now Fiori Restaurant) Designation Report* (LP-1904) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1994), prepared by David M. Breiner.

⁹ Though still called faience in Britain, common American usage is simply “architectural terra cotta.” For the purposes of this report, ceramic tile is a thin, flat product attached to a surface without an anchor; whereas, terra cotta refers to a thicker, more sculpted object secured to a surface with an anchor.

¹⁰ LPC, *Beaver Building Designation Report* (LP-1942) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1996), prepared by Jay Shockley; Susan Tunick, *Terra-Cotta Skyline* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 69.

¹¹ This section is based on LPC, *New York Architectural Terra Cotta Works Building Designation Report* (LP-1304) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1982), prepared by Patricia Florio.

¹² The Landmarks Preservation Commission wishes to thank Susan Tunick, President of the Friends of Terra Cotta, and Anne Walker, architectural historian with Peter Pennoyer Architects, for their assistance in the preparation of this report.

¹³ Christopher Gray, ed., *Fifth Avenue, 1911 from Start to Finish in Historic Block by Block Photographs* (N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1994), 36. The historic photograph shows what looks like two five and one-half story buildings fronting on Fifth Avenue and one four-story building with basement fronting on West 37th Street. An article titled “Noteworthy Building Operations on Fifth Avenue Will Add to Importance of Forty-Second Street Section” in the *New York Times* that appeared on page XXI on May 10, 1914 described the existing buildings to be demolished as two remodeled buildings. The New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Application 119-1914 states that the contractor was demolishing one building.

¹⁴ Leland M. Roth, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White 1870-1920: A Building List* (N.Y.: Garland Publishing, 1978), 64; New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Applications 1356-1889 and 1357-1889, and Alteration Application 1289-1891.

¹⁵ New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Application 119-1914 and New Building Docket Book.

¹⁶ Photographs dated August 31, 1914 and October 3, 1914 in the Warren and Wetmore Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University; *Architecture and Building Magazine* 42, no. 2 (February 1915): 76.

¹⁷ *Architecture and Building Magazine* 42, no. 2 (February 1915): 76.

¹⁸ "Noteworthy Building Operations on Fifth Avenue Will Add to Importance of Forty-Second Street Section," *New York Times*, May 10, 1914, p. XXI.

¹⁹ Carol W. Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Buildings in the Chicago Area, 1875-1925* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964).

²⁰ Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes: The 1914 Stewart Building," *The New York Times*, July 22, 1990, p. R6.

²¹ Carol Macht, *Classical Wedgwood Designs* (N.Y.: M. Barrows & Company, 1957); John Bedford, *Wedgwood Jasper Ware* (N.Y.: Walker & Company, 1964); Alison Kelly, *The Story of Wedgwood* (N.Y.: Viking Press, 1975).

²² Carol Macht, *Classical Wedgwood Designs* (N.Y.: M. Barrows & Company, 1957); Joseph and Anne Rykwert, *Robert and James Adam: The Men and Their Style* (N.Y.: Rizzoli International Publications, 1985), 133.

²³ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 266.

²⁴ David King, *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam* (Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1991); Robert Oresko, *The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

²⁵ LPC, *(Former) Della Robbia Bar (aka The "Crypt," now Fiori Restaurant) Designation Report* (LP-1904) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1994), prepared by David M. Breiner.

²⁶ "Whitney Warren's Dance," *New York Times*, November 19, 1912, p. 15.

²⁷ "Stewart Building Site," *New York Times*, October 13, 1929, p. RE15.

²⁸ "The Real Estate Field," *New York Times*, February 17, 1914, p. 18

²⁹ "Arnold Constable and Stewart's Join," *New York Times*, August 6, 1925, p. 29; "Stewart Building Site," *New York Times*, October 13, 1929, p. RE15.

³⁰ "Bonwit Teller Gets New Stewart Store," *New York Times*, April 13, 1930, p. 22; "Stewart & Co. Plan Move," *New York Times*, April 20, 1930, p. 11.

³¹ “Business Leases,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1929, p. 35; “Leases in Fifth Avenue,” *New York Times*, July 21, 1929, p. 140. According to the January 12, 1929 article, the Mark Cross Company controlled the leasing for the building under a lease from Robert Walton Goelet.

³² “Store to Move Uptown,” *New York Times*, September 23, 1935, p. 34.

³³ “The Real Estate Field,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1914, p. 18.

³⁴ “Leases on Fifth Avenue,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1927, p. 31; Wittnauer Company history from wittnauer.com.

³⁵ New York Telephone Company, *Manhattan Address Telephone Directories* (N.Y.: New York Telephone Company, 1929-1993).

³⁶ New York County, Office of the Registrar, Deeds and Conveyances.

³⁷ New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, Alteration Application 2243-1936.

³⁸ Warren and Wetmore Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University.

³⁹ “Noteworthy Building Operations on Fifth Avenue Will Add to Importance of Forty-Second Street Section,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1914, p. XXI.

⁴⁰ 1939-41 New York City Tax Photograph, Municipal Archives.

⁴¹ Ronda Wist, *On Fifth Avenue Then and Now* (N.Y.: Carol Publishing Group, 1992), p. 61, fig. 19-8.

⁴² New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Application 133-16.

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 Stewart & Company Building 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, among its important qualities, the Stewart & Company Building was constructed in 1914 to the design of architects Warren & Wetmore for Robert Walton Goelet, an owner of vast real estate holdings in Manhattan; that Warren & Wetmore was a highly successful and prolific firm best known for its designs for hotels and railroad related buildings, most notably Grand Central Terminal; that the builder, George A. Fuller Company, was a major force in the promotion and construction of tall buildings; that the terra cotta manufacturer, the New York Terra Cotta Company, was New York City's only major terra cotta manufacturer; that the design of the building reflects the unusual combination of diverse influences of the 18th century British neo-Classical movement and the late 19th century Chicago School of Architecture style; that the complex decoration of the terra cotta cladding shows the ornament and color potential of this important building material; that the color combination of blue and white in the architectural terra cotta is rarely used in architecture; that the building is an early example of boldly polychromatic terra cotta; that the delicate classically inspired decoration is a striking example of ornamentation covering the structural frame of a building; that while Warren & Wetmore has previously used neo-Classical sources for their work, the extensive use of polychrome, low relief decoration of classically inspired motifs over the structural frame makes the Stewart & Company Building a unique example in the firm's oeuvre; and that despite alterations at the ground floor and replacement of many of the upper floor windows, the building remains an unusual and unique work of Warren & Wetmore.

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 Stewart and Company Building, 402-404 Fifth Avenue (aka 2 West 37th Street), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 838, Lot 48, as its Landmark site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Stephen Byrns, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Vicki Match Suna,
Christopher Moore, Richard Olcott, Thomas Pike, Jan Pokorny



The Stewart & Company Building
402-404 Fifth Avenue aka 2 West 37th Street, Manhattan
*Photo: October 3, 1914, Warren & Wetmore Collection,
Avery Library, Columbia University*



The Stewart & Company Building
Photo: Carl Forster



The Stewart & Company Building
Photo: Carl Forster



The Stewart & Company Building
Photo: Carl Forster



The Stewart & Company Building
Photo: Carl Forster



The Stewart & Company Building
Cornice and Terra Cotta Details
Photo: Carl Forster



The Stewart & Company Building
Terra Cotta Details
Photo: Carl Forster



The Stewart & Company Building
Storefront Details
Photos: Carl Forster





The Stewart & Company Building
Terra Cotta Details
Photos: Carl Forster





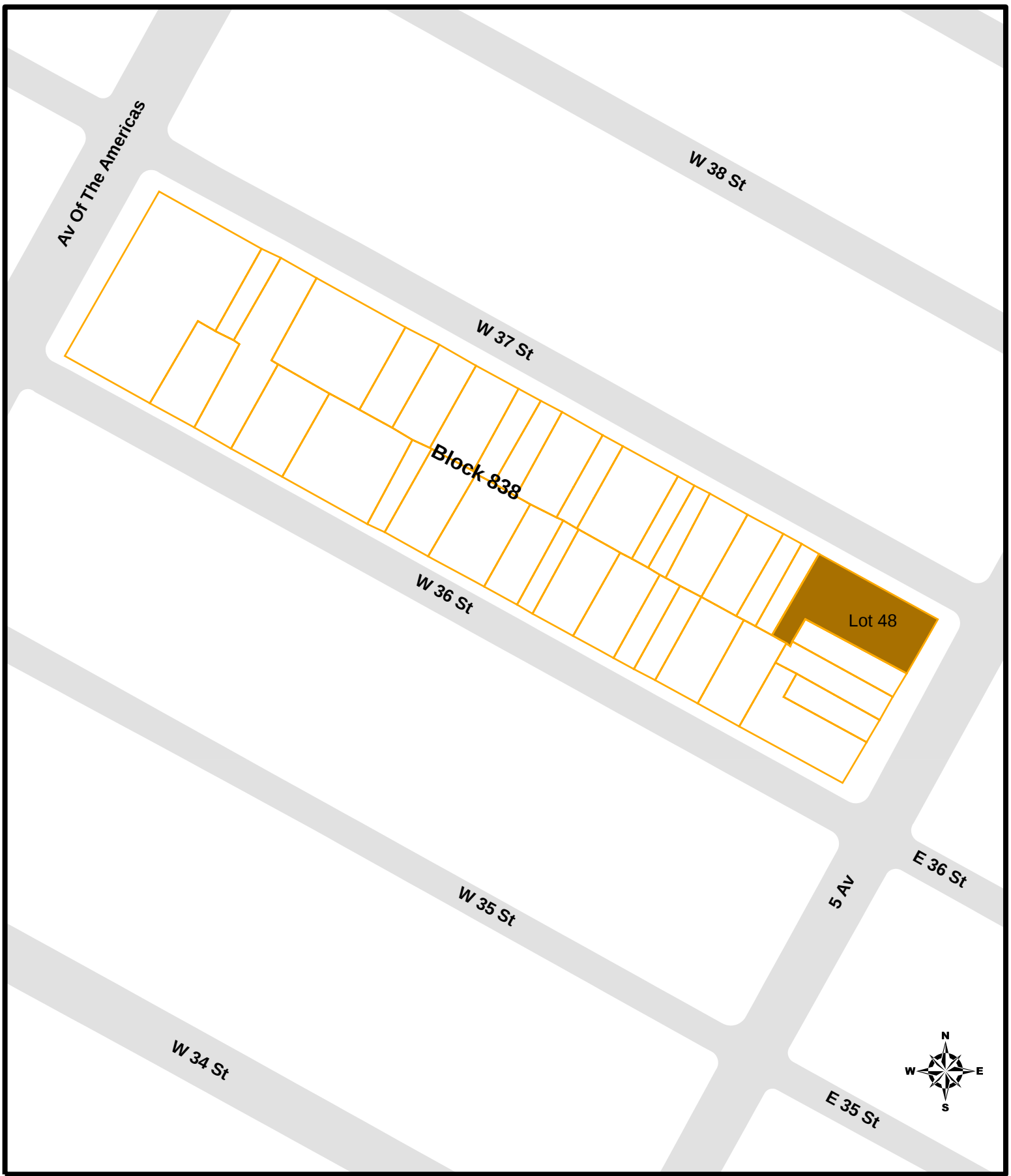
The Stewart & Company Building
Terra Cotta Details and the West Facade
Photos: Carl Forster





The Stewart & Company Building
Terra Cotta and Cornice Details
Photos: Carl Forster





Stewart and Company Building, 402-404 Fifth Avenue (LP-2185), (AKA: 2 West 37th Street), Manhattan.
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 838, Lot 48
Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 03C, December 2003