

154 WEST 14th STREET BUILDING, 154-162 West 14th Street (aka 51-59 Seventh Avenue), Manhattan. Built 1912-13; Herman Lee Meader, architect; New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., terra cotta.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 609, Lot 7.

On June 22, 2010, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 154 West 14th Street Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of New York Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, and the Historic Districts Council.

Summary

The 154 West 14th Street Building (1912-13), a 12-story speculative loft structure constructed for lawyer-banker and real estate developer Leslie R. Palmer, was the first completed New York City design by architect Herman Lee Meader, with whom Palmer collaborated on five projects. The building's location at the prominent intersection of 14th Street and Seventh Avenue anticipated the southward extension of Seventh Avenue and its new subway line, and benefitted from its proximity and direct access to the Holland Tunnel and west side freight terminals. Arranged in a tripartite base-shaft-capital composition with large window areas, it is a striking and unusual example of a large loft building partly clad in terra cotta – on the three-story base, on the spandrels between the white-brick piers of the midsection, and on the upper portion. It is also a fairly early example of the use of boldly polychromatic glazed terra cotta (in hues of white, beige, mustard, cobalt blue, celadon, and green) in New York City.

The terra cotta was manufactured by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., the city's only major producer of architectural terra cotta, of which Palmer was a long-time director, and the building is a virtual advertisement for the material's exterior use and, specifically, for the products of the firm. Meader's sumptuous and eclectic ornamental scheme for the 154 West 14th Street Building incorporated Secessionist, Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts, and Mission Revival style motifs. Although neither prolific nor well known, Meader produced other notable designs, such as the Cliff Dwelling Apartments (1914-17) at Riverside Drive and 96th Street, all of which employed interesting terra-cotta ornament. The top story of the 154 West 14th Street Building was altered c. 1950s-60s, though the Seventh Avenue facade is mostly intact.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Early 20th-Century Development of Seventh Avenue in Greenwich Village¹

The decades of the 1910s through the 1930s were marked by profound changes in the physical fabric of the Greenwich Village neighborhood caused by the construction of new subway lines and avenues. Beginning in 1913, with the condemnation of properties along the proposed new route, Seventh Avenue was extended southward from 11th Street to Carmine Street – at an angle to the existing Village street grid, causing a swath of demolition that resulted in irregular lots and oddly altered buildings – and farther south, Varick Street and West Broadway were widened on their eastern sides. The purpose of this extension was to relieve the ever-increasing vehicular congestion in the area as well as to create a right of way for the IRT (Interborough Rapid Transit Co.) subway line. Beginning in 1925, Sixth Avenue was also extended south, from its terminus at Carmine Street, and similarly created a right of way for the newly approved municipally-operated IND (Independent Rapid Transit Railroad) subway line. Both 100-foot-wide avenues were primary vehicular links to Canal Street, the principal feeder route to the Holland Tunnel (built 1919-27). Construction of the long-planned Seventh and Sixth Avenue extensions was completed in 1917 and 1931, respectively; construction of the new IRT and IND subway lines was completed by 1918 and 1940.² Another transportation-related improvement affecting the area was the demolition of the Sixth Avenue elevated railroad line in 1939, after a drawn-out battle over its fate in relation to the controversial subway unification plan championed by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.

The various sections of Seventh Avenue and the new Seventh Avenue South through Greenwich Village, as well as areas to the north and south, developed with distinct building types as speculation increased along with property values. The area around Varick Street saw a huge boom in large loft building construction associated with its location adjacent to the Holland Tunnel. Seventh Avenue South retained a small-scale commercial character (due largely to the irregular lots), while Seventh Avenue to the north experienced the growth of large-scale apartment buildings, as well as the expansion of St. Vincent's Hospital. Seventh Avenue farther north was developed with hotels and loft buildings, many of the latter associated with the garment industry, after the ultimate completion of Pennsylvania Station (1902-11, McKim, Mead & White; demolished), Seventh Avenue and 32nd Street.

Leslie R. Palmer and the 154 West 14th Street Building³

In 1908, the Adams Express Co. purchased six lots at the southwest corner of Seventh Avenue and West 14th Street, which were in turn conveyed in 1912 to the Seventh Avenue & Fourteenth Street Co. (Leslie R. Palmer, president) for about \$260,000. The *New York Times* remarked that “it is considered one of the choicest parcels on the lower end of the avenue.”⁴ Financed in part by a \$410,000 loan from the City Real Estate Co., Palmer planned a 12-story, \$350,000⁵ speculative loft building, to the design of architect Herman Lee Meader, which was “destined to exert a marked influence in the business growth and improvement of that hitherto neglected portion of the city,” according to the *Times*. Palmer also enthused that Seventh Avenue “is one of the best located thoroughfares in the city. It is much nearer freight destinations than any other avenue to the eastward, and when the subway extends down its length... its transit facilities will be the best. In many respects it has the best natural advantages of any avenue in the city...”⁶ Although its location was removed from the center of the garment industry, the building site directly anticipated the Seventh Avenue subway line (with a stop at 14th Street) and

benefitted from its proximity to the west side freight terminals and direct access to the Holland Tunnel.

Leslie Richard Palmer (1877-1930), born in Orange County, New York, graduated from Cornell University (1892) and was admitted to the bar in 1897. He was prominent in New York corporate and real estate legal circles, and became a real estate investor and developer. He also turned to banking in Westchester County in the 1910s. He obtained control of the First National Bank of Croton, the Ossining Trust Co., and the First National Bank of Hastings, and in 1915 effected the merger of three other banks into the First National Bank & Trust Co. of Yonkers, of which he was president. In 1914, Palmer was appointed a member of the Federal Reserve Board. Among many corporate roles, he served as president of the Palmer Realty Co., West Side Mortgage Co. of New York, Seventh Avenue Securities Corp., Commonwealth Securities Co., Thirty-second and Thirty-third Street Corp., Knickerbocker Mortgage & Realty Co., Electric Illuminating Co. of New York, and Murray Hill Investing Co. Palmer left an estate of over three million dollars.

Plans were filed for the 154 West 14th Street Building in February 1912, and construction on the steel-framed structure began in May 1912 and was completed in May 1913. The builder was G.W. Buchholz.⁷ Employing the latest technology in loft construction, the building was designed for maximum light to the loft spaces, as well as for automotive delivery. According to the *Times*:

Among the features of the new building will be special facilities for the economic handling of heavy freight. A driveway from Seventh Avenue will lead to a courtyard [on the south side], along the rear of which will run a shipping platform, and from there two freight elevators will connect with all the upper floors. The main entrance will be on Fourteenth Street. The corner of the ground floor will be a store, and the floor above will be planned as a showroom. Both will have fronts mainly of glass. The facade has been designed to supply all the light possible, and besides making the windows as large as is practicable, the upper part will not depend upon the inevitable cornice to ornament the top story and cast dark shadows over the windows below.⁸

The building is functionally typical of the speculative loft buildings that developed between the late 1890s and World War I in New York's garment district and elsewhere. Particularly evident in the Ladies' Mile Historic District nearby, such structures were generally 6 to 12 stories in height, had frames of steel or structural iron, a high ratio of windows to wall surfaces, double-height storefronts or showrooms, and façades following the base-shaft-capital scheme and articulated as grids. Interior spaces were usually designed to be as flexible as possible to accommodate various office, manufacturing, and warehouse uses. Goods that were manufactured and stored in these buildings could be sold locally, such as in the retail stores located along Broadway and Fifth and Sixth Avenues, or shipped conveniently to locations across the country. The speculative loft building quickly became an integral part of the growing national market for ready-made clothing and other products.

What particularly distinguishes the 154 West 14th Street Building is the exuberant design treatment of the two principal facades, which are clad in stone and brick and, especially, terra cotta. Architect Meader's first completed New York City structure, this was also the first of five known collaborations between Palmer as developer and Meader (see below). Interestingly, Palmer was a director of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co. (NYATCC), from at least

1908 until 1921, and four of their five joint projects employed terra cotta produced by that firm. NYATCC was established in 1886 by Orlando B. Potter (with Asahel Clarke Geer) after his experience in the construction of his Potter Building (1883-86, Norris G. Starkweather), 35-38 Park Row,⁹ which used extensive architectural terra cotta. The only major architectural terra cotta firm in New York City, it became one of the largest such American manufacturers, producing ornament for many of the city's notable structures.¹⁰ In that context, the 154 West 14th Street Building is a virtual advertisement for the use of exterior terra cotta, and specifically for the products of NYATCC.

Architect: Herman Lee Meader¹¹

Born in New Orleans, Herman Lee Meader (1874-1930) was educated at Soule College in that city, studied architecture for two years at Cornell University (1897), and graduated from Harvard College in 1898. He then worked in the architectural office of Ernest Flagg for six years, followed by that of Raymond F. Almirall for four years. His period with Almirall may have coincided with the commission for a number of pavilions (1909-11) at Seaview Hospital in Staten Island, for which Almirall designed notable terra-cotta ornament and ceramic murals (executed by De Porceleyne Fles in Delft, Holland).¹² In 1907, he designed the house of his sister, Bertha Meader Patton, in Greenville, South Carolina. He was associated with his brother, Louis J. Meader, as officers in the Architectural Supply Co. and the Meader-Atlas Co., a Brooklyn-based feed concern, and was the author of several articles and books relating to humor. Around 1910, Meader traveled through Europe and, upon his return to New York, established an architectural practice in 1911. His career was fairly short, from 1911 to 1922, and comprised just nine known built New York City commissions, each of which employed some terra cotta as a cladding material. Meader's designs are notable, a number being rather idiosyncratic for New York City, and from the beginning, his ornamental effects were commented upon.

Meader's earliest known project was a large \$4 million, 24-story hotel (1911, not built) at the northeast corner of Seventh Avenue and West 37th Street, which was to have been arranged with four pavilions and clad in "polished granites, glazed faience, and Venetian glass mosaic... combined to furnish an exterior surface of brilliant color and high glaze," according to the *New York Times*.¹³ The 154 West 14th Street Building (1912-13) for Palmer was Meader's first completed New York structure, clad in part with NYATCC terra cotta. Meader's Waldorf Building (1914-15), 2-16 West 33rd Street, is a 12-story loft/office building that was Vincent Astor's first major independent development project. The *Times* commented that "the lower three stories will be masked by a veneer of mirrors, permitting a facade of plate glass for its entire 200 feet of length,"¹⁴ and it also employed NYATCC terra cotta. Meader later purchased this building and resided here.

The Cliff Dwelling Apartments (1914-17), 339 West 96th Street/ 240 Riverside Drive, a 12-story apartment hotel for Leslie R. Palmer, is perhaps Meader's best known commission due to its prominent site and unusual ornamentation. According to family members, Meader made a number of visits to the Yucatan peninsula and elsewhere, and used motifs here inspired by native Mayan or Aztec cultures, such as cattle skulls, feathers, and masks, executed in NYATCC terra cotta. Another equally distinctive Meader commission was a seven-story office/showrooms building for Benjamin W. Mayer at 130 East 25th Street (aka 54-58 Lexington Avenue) (1915-16), which also employed Southwestern/ Native American motifs executed in NYATCC terra cotta and decorative brickwork.

Three more structures commissioned by Palmer, all with interesting ornament, are: 35-37 West 37th Street (1915-16), 12-story loft building with NYATCC terra cotta; Murray Hill Building (1915-16), 10 East 39th Street/ 7 East 38th Street, a 12-story loft building (next door to Gustav Stickley's 1913 Craftsman Building designed by Mulliken & Moeller at No. 6) using terra cotta from the Federal Terra Cotta Co.; and 509 Fifth Avenue (1916-17) a 12-story commercial building with NYATCC terra cotta. In 1917, the *Times* announced that Palmer was trading these three properties (worth \$6 million dollars) with Thomas H. Gill, a retired Western capitalist/railroad man, for a Montana gold mine, an Alabama orange grove, and Wisconsin timberland.

Meador's last two known designs were for the Greenwich Village Theater (1916, demolished), an experimental theater for Marguerite Abbott Barker (daughter of the president of the Eastman Kodak Co.) at Seventh Avenue South and Christopher Street, which employed NYATCC terra cotta; and the 1920-22 addition to the American Surety Co. Building (Bruce Price, 1894-96), 100 Broadway,¹⁵ which used Federal terra cotta. Meador turned to development and was the principal of Lee Meador, Inc., a realty holding and operating company. At his death, Meador left an estate worth over \$1.2 million dollars.

The 154 West 14th Street Building and Early 20th-Century Polychrome Terra Cotta Buildings in New York City¹⁶

The 154 West 14th Street Building is notable as an example of a tall early-20th-century New York City building in which each section of the tripartite base-shaft-capital scheme is differentiated by color and materials. This design solution, exemplified by Cass Gilbert's Broadway Chambers Building (1899-1900), 273-277 Broadway,¹⁷ was promoted by architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler as "the next advance in the execution of the accepted scheme"¹⁸ [tripartite division]. The building is also a fairly early example of the use of boldly polychromatic glazed terra cotta in New York City, as well as a significant survivor of this period of terra cotta development. The *New York Times* in 1907 boasted that

New York architects have discovered another medium of artistic expression. The monotony of dull gray and red buildings and miles of brown sandstone and marble are being broken into with colors of brilliant hue. Blues and yellows are appearing on the city's skyscrapers; green, rose, and gold tint her domes and towers.... The materials used for this new ornamentation are colored terra cotta, tiles, and faience.... one of the most imperishable of building materials... admitting of an infinite variety of color schemes.... These advantages, the search for novelty, and the influence of modern steel-skeleton construction are responsible for the movement.¹⁹

Though polychromatic glazed terra cotta was employed early on in such designs as the Broadway Chambers Building and the Madison Square Presbyterian Church (1903-06, McKim, Mead & White; demolished), monochromatic and subtle shades, hues resembling masonry, and "discreet" use of color were general rules for terra cotta in New York until the 1920s. Two other early examples with polychrome terra-cotta accents are St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church (1902-04, William W. Renwick), 209-217 West 132nd Street, and Thomson Meter Co. Building (1908-09; Louis E. Jallade), 100-110 Bridge Street, Brooklyn.²⁰

Critic Herbert D. Croly in 1906, however, challenged architects in the use of polychromatic glazed terra cotta:

While the process of making glazed and colored terra cotta has not yet been entirely perfected, there can be no doubt that the manufacturers of the material are more successful about making it than the architects are about using it. American architects are, of course, very timid about adopting a material, for the successful employment of which there are no good precedents. They are, of course, accustomed to using terra cotta in the ordinary way, and most of them appreciate fully the color values of rough or white glazed terra cotta. But the use of livelier colors is a very different thing...²¹

Despite this opinion, Croly was critical of Clinton & Russell's bold and novel use of polychromatic glazed terra cotta on the Beaver Building (1903-04), 82-92 Beaver Street:²²

How far terra cotta that is both glazed and colored can be successfully applied to skyscrapers is still a doubtful matter, because no entirely satisfactory experiments have yet been made. Certain instances in which it has been tried are not worthy of unqualified commendation. The upper stories of the Beaver Building... are decorated with panels of glazed terra cotta in bright colors; and while the brightness of the color is in itself a praiseworthy characteristic rather than the reverse, they do not, in the present instance, harmonize with each other, nor do they constitute a pleasing scheme of decoration for the top stories of a tall building.²³

Architects' and Builders' Magazine (1904), on the other hand, stated of the Beaver Building's terra cotta that "the major part in tone [matched] the limestone below, while ornamental portions stand in bold relief strongly colored in green, buff, and red. The effect of this more or less brilliant color treatment is to strengthen the outline of the building and make it a notable feature amid its surroundings."²⁴

The 154 West 14th Street Building is a striking and unusual example of a large early-1910s loft building clad in polychromatic glazed terra cotta (in shades of white, beige, mustard, cobalt blue, celadon, and green) – on the three-story base, on the spandrels between the white-brick piers of the midsection, and on the upper section – and with highly distinctive ornament incorporating Secessionist, Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts, and Mission Revival style motifs. (The *Times* in 1912 had stated, not entirely accurately, that "the base will be of polished pink granite, and from the top of the base to the roof the facades will be of white glazed terra cotta with colored faience set into the ornamental bands").²⁵ Above the pink granite watertable and entrance surround on 14th Street, the three-story base is clad in mustard-colored terra cotta with Art Nouveau style ornament consisting of stylized anthemias at the bottom of the piers, sinuous interlocking organic foliate motifs, and green diamonds set within blue surrounds at each pier above the second story. The base is capped by a complex cornice consisting of a roll molding band with cobalt blue accents, a green egg-and-dart molding, and corbel blocks with flowers. The spandrel panels of the seven-story midsection feature rows of sunflowers with central cobalt blue diamonds. The two stories of the upper section have different treatments. The Secessionist-inspired 11th story features stylized wreaths flanked by green foliation at the piers, a cobalt blue fret-patterned spandrel, and stylized corbeled balcony. The white terra-cotta 12th story (which was altered c. 1950s-60s – the 14th Street facade was mostly stripped) originally featured repeated Mission Revival-inspired curved gables at the ends of each facade, ornamented by cobalt blue disks flanked by wings. The gables were linked by ornamental bands suggesting

“kivas” (projecting beams seen in traditional Southwestern adobe architecture) consisting of stylized curved brackets with projecting flower bosses.

Later Ownership History²⁶

In December 1914 (just a year and a half after its completion), the 154 West 14th Street Building was transferred to the Adams Land & Building Co., a subsidiary of the Adams Express Co., previous owner of the site. The property was acquired in December 1919 by the A.H. Investing Co. (Michael Kaufman, president) and the mortgage was assigned by the Adams Express Co. to Morris Brukenfeld. In April 1920, the building was conveyed to Brukenfeld's 154 West 14th Street Co. Morris Brukenfeld (c. 1879-1958), born in Vienna, arrived as a child in the United States and while a teenager worked in the silk and velvet trade. In 1907, he founded M. Brukenfeld & Co., velvet and silk jobbers, which he headed until his retirement in 1936, and was involved in numerous charitable endeavors. By the 1910s, he had also begun to invest in real estate in New York City and Palm Beach, Florida, specializing in industrial and commercial properties. Brukenfeld, and his son, Carl (as well as the 154 West 14th Street Co.) had offices in this building. In June 1959, the structure was purchased by Abner Properties, headed by Abner A. Rosen, a textile producer and real estate investor whose father, Joseph Rosen, had founded a family real estate development and management firm in 1942.

Tenants²⁷

Since its completion in 1913, the 154 West 14th Street Building has housed a very wide variety of manufacturers and product distributors, of goods such as paper, soap dispensers, electrical and heating and air conditioning equipment, and jewelry.²⁸ By the turn of the 20th century, the adjacent blocks along 14th Street had become known as “Little Spain” due to the settling in the neighborhood of Spanish-speaking immigrants and the variety of businesses and organizations catering to them, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe Roman Catholic Church (1921) at 229-231 West 14th Street, the city's first Spanish-speaking Catholic parish. This was reflected in the 154 West 14th Street Building by the presence of Jaime V. Lago's private bank (c. 1918-28); Campania Hispano-Americana/ Spanish Book Store (c. 1919-24); the Spanish Consul (also representing the Turkish Consul) (c. 1921-26); and Casa Gomez/ Goyescas Corp./ Libreria Gomez (c. 1950-59), books and perfumes.

The Corn Exchange (later Chemical) Bank was a long-term tenant on the ground story (1923- c. 1986) and the Postal Telegraph Cable Co. was located on the 8th floor (c. 1929-39). The Works Progress Administration Cartographic and Map Making Project of the U.S. Treasury Dept. occupied three floors (c. 1937) producing relief maps of New York City and several foreign countries, as well as models of tunnels. The so-called “father of modern science fiction,” Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967), had his businesses Gernsback Publications, Inc./ Popular Book Corp./ Hudson Specialties Co. in the building (c. 1956-59).²⁹ The offices and shipping department of the Vanguard Recording Society/ Vanguard Record Sales Corp./ Vanguard Stereolab, Inc./ Bach Guild, one of the important record labels of the time associated with classical, folk and popular music, were located here (c. 1959-66); Vanguard was linked during this period with the Newport Folk Festival. Several long-term organizational tenants have been Mondell Institute/ Manhattan Technical Institute/ Manhattan Reading Institute (1956-present); Federation of the Handicapped/ Fedcap Homecare (c. 1960-97); and Eastern School/ New York Institute of Dietetics/ New York Food & Hotel Management School/ Culinary Academy of New York/ Career Academy of New York (c. 1971-present).

Description

Historic: 12-story corner loft structure clad in stone, brick, and terra cotta, incorporating Secessionist, Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts, and Mission Revival style motifs; pink granite watertable and entrance surround on 14th Street; three-story base clad in terra cotta capped by complex ornamental terra-cotta cornice; second-story multi-pane show windows with metal frames with pilasters, and decorative metal spandrels; seven-story midsection with white brick piers and spandrel panels ornamented with terra cotta; 11th story ornamented with terra cotta, capped by stylized corbeled balcony; white terra-cotta 12th story (altered 1930s) mostly intact on Seventh Avenue, with stylized curved terra-cotta brackets and curved end gables with terra-cotta ornament

Alterations: shopfronts, awnings, signage, lighting, and rolldown gates; metal doors and transom of 14th Street main entrance; large louver replaced the window over main entrance; original triple windows (floors three through 12) with one-over-one double-hung sash replaced (by 1931) with horizontal pivot steel frame windows, and most replaced recently by paired metal windows with one-over-one double-hung sash on Seventh Avenue and triple metal windows with one-over-one double-hung sash on 14th Street (some have louvers); upper portion of 12th story on Seventh Avenue (originally clad in white terra, with ends repeating the curved end gables below) replaced (c. 1950s-60s) by a brick parapet, and the 12th-story facade on 14th Street mostly stripped of ornament (terra cotta between windows survives) and similarly altered

East Wall: brick cladding (painted); unarticulated; pierced by windows; water tower on roof

Site: Loading Court (south): driveway with rear loading platform; terra cotta and brick returns continue articulation of Seventh Avenue facade; unarticulated red brick walls of court pierced by windows; fire escapes; metal rolldown gate with door

Sources: Rendering, *NYT*, Jan. 14, 1912; New York Public Library digital online photograph (1931); NYC Dept. of Taxes photograph (c. 1939)

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NOTES

1. Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Greenwich Village Historic District Extension II Designation Report* (LP-2366)(New York: City of New York, 2010), essay researched and written by Olivia Klose; "Insist on Extension of Seventh Avenue," *New York Times* (NYT), Nov. 25, 1912, 6; "Great Destruction in Old Greenwich," NYT, Nov. 23, 1913, XX1; "6th Av. Extension Campaign Started," NYT, Mar. 4, 1923, E1; "Seventh Avenue Losing Landmarks," NYT, Dec. 5, 1926, RE1; "Landmarks Vanish for New Avenue," NYT, Feb. 20, 1927, RE2.
2. The city's condemnation of property and assessment of taxes for the Seventh Avenue cut-through was denounced by property owners, who brought suit against the city. Partial as well as entire lots were condemned, resulting in haphazard parcels and partially demolished buildings. In the case of the Sixth Avenue cut-through, the city abandoned this approach, condemning only entire lots and reserving the resulting irregular parcels for the creation of city-owned parks. A further difference between the two extensions was the fact that property owners with business interests in the area had actually petitioned the city for extension of Sixth Avenue below Carmine Street, anticipating increased real estate values and commercial potential.
3. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; "Leslie R. Palmer," U.S. Census (New York, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930), *Who's Who in New York City and State* (New York: Lewis Histl. Pub. Co., 1905), 685, *New York City Directories* (1908-15), *Who's Who in Finance, Banking and Insurance* (New York: Who's Who in Finance, Inc., 1911), 649-650, and *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 17 (New York: James T. White & Co., 1921), 24; "Leslie R. Palmer's Building Syndicate Leases Site...," NYT, June 3, 1915; "Latest Dealings in the Realty Field," NYT, June 10, 1917, 39; L.R. Palmer obit., NYT, Sept. 1, 1930, 13; "Mrs. Palmer Files \$3,385,000 Bond," NYT, Dec. 14, 1930, 19; "Leslie R. Palmer Left \$2,849,637," NYT, July 24, 1935, 17; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (NB 102-1912); "Real Estate Transfers," NYT, Mar. 24, 1908, 12; "The Real Estate Field," NYT, Jan. 10, 1912, 25; "The Building Department," NYT, Feb. 24, 1912, 17; "Plans Filed for New Construction," *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide*, Feb. 24, 1912, 397; "Loans for Loft Buildings" and "Real Estate Transfers," NYT, Apr. 4, 1912, 20.
4. "Buyer of Adams Express Co. Plot," NYT, Jan. 4, 1912, 19.
5. The initial filing estimate was \$250,000, but was revised by Meader in a letter to the Dept. of Buildings dated Feb. 27, 1912.
6. "Busy Future Predicted for Seventh Avenue Locality," NYT, Jan. 14, 1912, RE2.
7. A civil engineer, Buchholz graduated from Columbia University (1901) and worked as a general contractor, principally with Snare & Triest Co. and North-Eastern Construction Co., both of New York. In 1919, he was selected as acting secretary of the Associated General Contractors of America. "Contractors Select Managers," *Iron Age* (1919), 558.
8. "Busy Future Predicted..."
9. The Potter Building is a designated New York City Landmark.
10. These include: Carnegie Hall (1889-91, William B. Tuthill), Montauk Club (1889-91, Francis H. Kimball), West End Collegiate Church and School (1892-93, Robert W. Gibson), Ansonia Hotel (1899-1904, Paul E.M. Duboy), and Plaza Hotel (1905-07, Henry Hardenbergh). The Montauk Club is located within the Park Slope Historic District; all the other buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.
11. LPC, architects files; James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (New York: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1989), 53; New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., archives (courtesy of Susan Tunick); "Society," [*New Orleans*] *Times-Picayune*, June 25, 1899, 13; "Herman Lee Meader," in Harvard College Class of 1898, *Quindecennial Report* (June 1913), 219-220, *Who's Who in New York* (1907), 920, and U.S. Passport Application (1924); "New York Incorporations," NYT, Aug. 21, 1908, 9; *The Trow Copartnership and Corporation Directory of New York City* (1908, 1909); "Another Sky Scraper," *Granite Cutters' Journal* (July 1911), 19; "The Building Department," NYT, Dec. 15, 1914, 18; "The Real Estate Field," NYT, June 3, 1915, 18; "The Building Department," NYT, July 15, 1915, 16, and

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- Oct. 2, 1915, 18; "A Riverside Cliff Dwelling," *NYT*, Jan. 23, 1916, XX6; "Flat-Iron Apartment on the Drive," *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide*, Feb. 5, 1916, 212; "Cliff Dweller Apartments," in Carla Breeze, *Pueblo Deco* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 108-109; Christopher Gray, "Cliff Dwelling at 96th Street and Riverside Drive: A Terra Cotta Masterpiece in Unusual Dimensions," *NYT*, Jan. 6, 2002; "The Building Department," *NYT*, Mar. 1, 1916, 19; "Theatre in Village," *NYT*, Nov. 16, 1916, 9; "The Greenwich Village Theatre," in Constance D. Mackay, *The Little Theatre in the United States* (New York: Henry Holt Co., 1917), 73-76; "Wife Seeks Release," *NYT*, Aug. 16, 1919, 10; "Country Gardens on Skyscrapers," *Popular Science* (Nov. 1924), 48; "Apartment to Replace Old East Side Flats," *NYT*, Oct. 4, 1925, E12; "Take a 100-Year Lease," *NYT*, Dec. 1, 1926, 48; "Towering Apartment House for Greenwich Village," *NYT*, Feb. 9, 1930, RE2; Meader obit., *NYT*, Feb. 15, 1930, 17; "Herman L. Meader," *The Cornell Alumni News*, Mar. 7, 1930, 276; "A Village Era Passes," *NYT*, June 29, 1930, 102; "H.L. Meader Left \$1,136,412" and "Estates Appraised," *NYT*, Aug. 13, 1930, 11 and 38; "The History Corner," [*Greenville, S.C.*] *Hampton-Pinckney Gazette* (Dec. 1999), 2.
12. These buildings are included in the New York City Farm Colony/ Seaview Hospital Historic District.
 13. "Seventh Avenue Destined to be Rival of Broadway," *NYT*, June 25, 1911, XX1.
 14. "Vincent Astor as a Loft Builder," *NYT*, Dec. 7, 1913, XX2.
 15. The building is a designated New York City Landmark.
 16. This section is adapted from: LPC, *Beaver Building Designation Report* (LP-1942)(New York: City of New York, 1996), researched and written by Jay Shockley.
 17. The Broadway Chambers Building is a designated New York City Landmark.
 18. Cited in Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings 2* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1961), 614.
 19. *NYT*, Jan. 27, 1907.
 20. Both buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.
 21. Herbert D. Croly, "Glazed and Colored Terra-Cotta," *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1906), 319.
 22. The Beaver Building is a designated New York City Landmark.
 23. Croly, 322.
 24. "The Beaver Building," *Architects' and Builders' Magazine* (Aug. 1904), 520.
 25. "Busy Future Predicted..."
 26. New York County; "Buyer of Seventh Avenue Corner," *NYT*, Nov. 26, 1914, 18; "Real Estate Transfers," *NYT*, Dec. 2, 1914, 18; "Real Estate Field," *NYT*, Nov. 6, 1919, 26; "Real Estate Transfers," *NYT*, Dec. 21, 1919, 114; "Assignment of Mortgages," Dec. 23, 1919, 25; "Plans Big Alteration," *NYT*, Apr. 11, 1920, RE1; "Pair Wed 50 Years Donate \$250,000," *NYT*, Nov. 3, 1952, 18; "Lefcourt Realty in New Control," *NYT*, July 9, 1956, 37; Brukenfeld obit., *NYT*, Mar. 14, 1958, 25; "A Peek Behind the Georgian Facade...", *NYT*, May 5, 1967, 27; "The Rosen Group Properties," www.rosengroupinc.net website (June 2011).
 27. *Manhattan Address Directories* (1929-93); "14 Street and Union Square Preservation Plan," Columbia University Historic Preservation Studio (2005-06), 51-52, 56-57; "Business Leases," *NYT*, July 16, 1912, 15; U.S Senate, Committee on Finance, "Toothpicks of Wood" in *Tariff Schedules* (1913), 609-610; Hygeia Antiseptic Toothpick Co., advertisement, *The Pharmaceutical Era* (1916), 52; Jaime V. Lago, advertisement, *El Grafico* (Apr. 1918), 543; [Campania Hispano-Americana], *Foreign-Born: A Bulletin of International Service* (Nov. 1919), 32; [Soapitor Co.], American Society of Mechanical Engineers, *Membership List* (1919), 139; "Plan Bronx Factory," *NYT*, Aug. 22, 1923, 25; "Spain Plans to Tax its Citizens," *NYT*, Mar. 23, 1926, 37; "Garment Centre Deal," *NYT*, Apr. 13, 1926, 42; "Lago's Private Bank is Closed by State," *NYT*, July 4, 1928, 25; "Lago Bank Deficit is Put at \$250,000," *NYT*, July 6, 1928, 27; "Head of Lago Bank Held in Shortage," *NYT*, July 10, 1928, 8; "Co-Receiver Asked in Lago Bankruptcy," *NYT*, July 18, 1928, 29; "Business Leases," *NYT*, Apr. 11, 1930, 55, and July 13, 1930, 156; "Latest

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- Recorded Leases,” *NYT*, Feb. 8, 1933, 36; [T & P Optical Co.], maxprager.com website; “Treasury Leases Part of Building,” *NYT*, July 8, 1937, 42; “Model of the City To Be Put on View,” *NYT*, Oct. 3, 1937, A10; “Whole Floor Leased by Cooler Company,” *NYT*, Oct. 20, 1939, 46; Alfred E. Seelig obit. [L.J. Wing Mfg. Co.], *NYT*, Sept. 14, 1942, 15; “Wing Units to be Consolidated,” *NYT*, Mar. 3, 1950, 32; “Tesla Memorial is Unveiled Here,” *NYT*, June 26, 1956, 43; “Other Sales Mergers,” *NYT*, July 25, 1957, 37; “About New York” [Hugo Gernsback], *NYT*, Jan. 6, 1958, 34; Vanguard Record Sales Corp., advertisement, *Billboard*, Nov. 2, 1959, 18; “A Proud Record of Aid,” Jan. 17, 1960, 76; “Announcing the New Offices & Sound Studio of Vanguard Records,” *Billboard*, Nov. 19, 1956, 50; Gernsback obit., *NYT*, Aug. 20, 1967, 88; “Publishers: Hugo Gernsback,” www.magazineart.org website; Star Career Academy, “History,” starinstitute.com website (2010); “Profiles: Vanguard Records: A History,” www.ejazznews.com website, Jan. 19, 2003; “A Jewel of a Deal,” www.costar.com website, Mar. 23, 2000; “Colliers International ‘Cooks Up’ Large Lease for Culinary School,” www.nyinc.com website, June 11, 2010.
28. Among the longer-term tenants that remained here for decades, have been: Whiting Paper Co. (c. 1913-45), flat papers and stationery, on five floors (one reference called this the “Whiting Building”); Hygeia Antiseptic Toothpick Co./ Herz Straw Co. (c. 1913-25), quill toothpicks and “strictly sanitary” drinking straws; Soapitor Co./ Granulator Soap Co. (c. 1918-67), hand soap dispensers; Globe Ticket Co. (c. 1922-55); Signal Engineering & Manufacturing Co. (c. 1926-56), electrical control and signal equipment; L.J. Wing Manufacturing Co. (c. 1929-59), general offices, heating and air conditioning equipment; P.H. Pravda Clothing/ Phil’s Clothing Shop (c. 1929-59); Individual Towel & Cabinet Service Co. (c. 1929-55), towel supply; T & P Optical Co./ Styl-Rite Optics (c. 1937-56), eyeglass frame manufacturers; Cameo Die & Label Co. (c. 1939-69), engravers, labels; Canaday Cooler Co. (c. 1939-55); and Frederick Goldman, Inc./ International Gold Metals, Inc. (c. 1971-2000), jewelry manufacturer.
29. Born in Luxembourg, Gernsback moved to the U.S. in 1904, began importing European radio parts, founded the popular Wireless Assn. of America (1909), and eventually held some 80 scientific and radio-electronic patents. He became the editor and publisher of over 50 periodicals, including *Modern Electrics* (1908), the world’s first electronics magazine, *Amazing Stories* (1927), the first magazine dedicated solely to science fiction, *Sexology* (1933), America’s first “sex science” magazine, and *Radio-Electronics* (1948).

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 154 West 14th Street 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 154 West 14th Street Building, a 12-story speculative loft structure constructed in 1912-13 for lawyer-banker and real estate developer Leslie R. Palmer, was the first completed New York City design by architect Herman Lee Meader, with whom Palmer collaborated on five projects; that the building's location at the prominent intersection of 14th Street and Seventh Avenue anticipated the southward extension of Seventh Avenue and its new subway line, and benefitted from its proximity and direct access to the Holland Tunnel and west side freight terminals; that, arranged in a tripartite base-shaft-capital composition with large window areas, it is a striking and unusual example of a large loft building partly clad in terra cotta, on the three-story base, on the spandrels between the white-brick piers of the midsection, and on the upper portion, and it is also a fairly early example of the use of boldly polychromatic glazed terra cotta (in hues of white, beige, mustard, cobalt blue, celadon, and green) in New York City; that the terra cotta was manufactured by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., the city's only major producer of architectural terra cotta, of which Palmer was a long-time director, and the building is a virtual advertisement for the material's exterior use and, specifically, for the products of the firm; and that, although neither prolific nor well known, Meader produced other notable designs, such as the Cliff Dwelling Apartments (1914-17) at Riverside Drive and 96th Street, all of which employed interesting terra-cotta ornament, and, in particular, Meader's sumptuous and eclectic ornamental scheme for the 154 West 14th Street Building incorporated Secessionist, Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts, and Mission Revival style motifs.

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 154 West 14th Street Building, 154-162 West 14th Street (aka 51-59 Seventh Avenue), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 609, Lot 7, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Frederick Bland, Michael Devonshire, Michael Goldblum,
Christopher Moore, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



154 West 14th Street Building, 154-162 West 14th Street (aka 51-59 Seventh Avenue), Manhattan
Block 609, Lot 7

Photo: *Christopher D. Brazee* (2010)



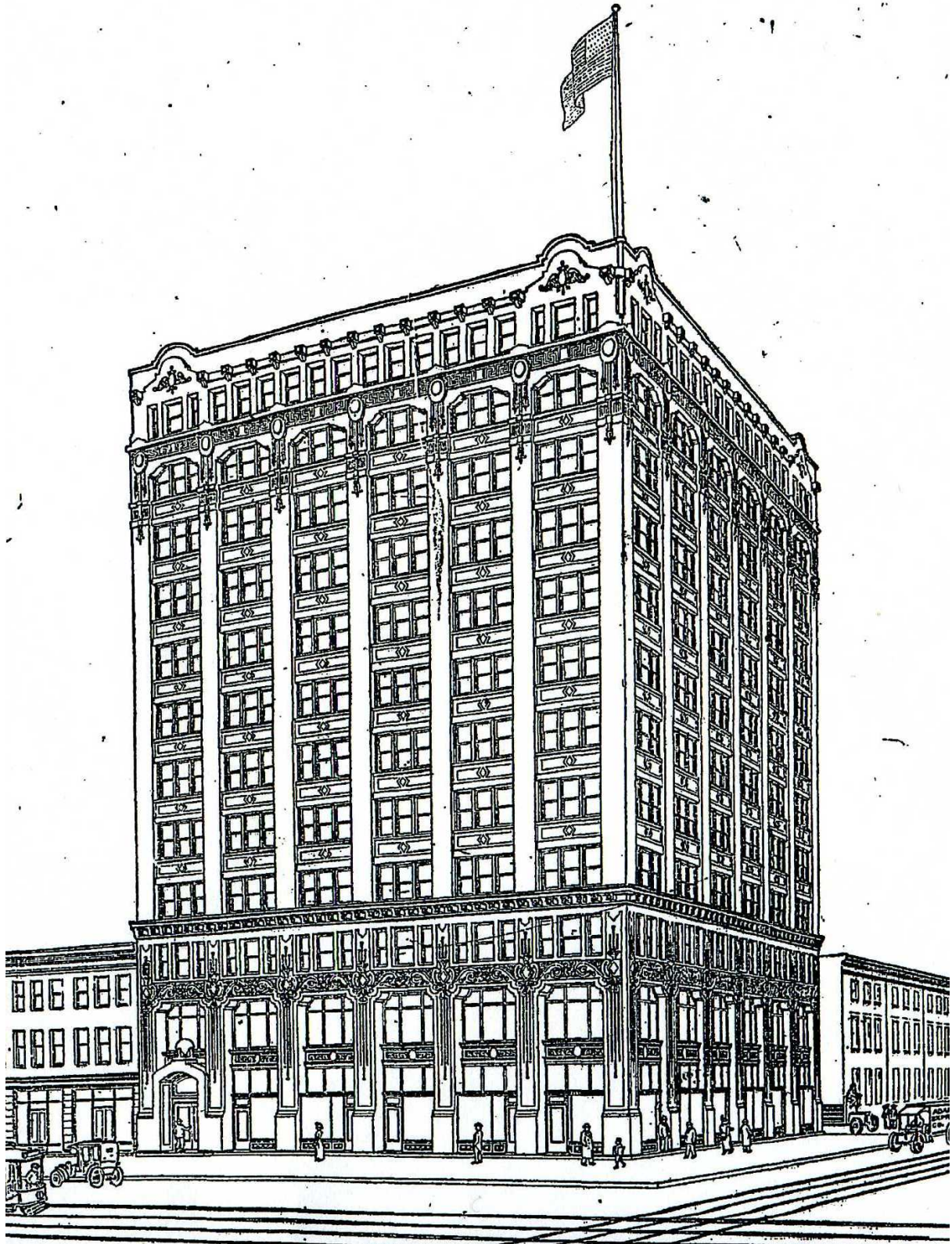
154 West 14th Street Building, 14th Street facade

Photo: *Christopher D. Brazee* (2010)



154 West 14th Street Building, Seventh Avenue facade

Photo: *Christopher D. Brazee* (2010)



154 West 14th Street Building, rendering

Source: *New York Times* (Jan. 14, 1912)



154 West 14th Street Building, Seventh Avenue facade

Photo: *Percy L. Sperr (1931)* Courtesy of Digital Gallery (ID No. 709667F),
New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations



154 West 14th Street Building, Seventh Avenue facade

Photo: *Percy L. Sperr (1931)* Courtesy of Digital Gallery (ID No. 709667F),
New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations



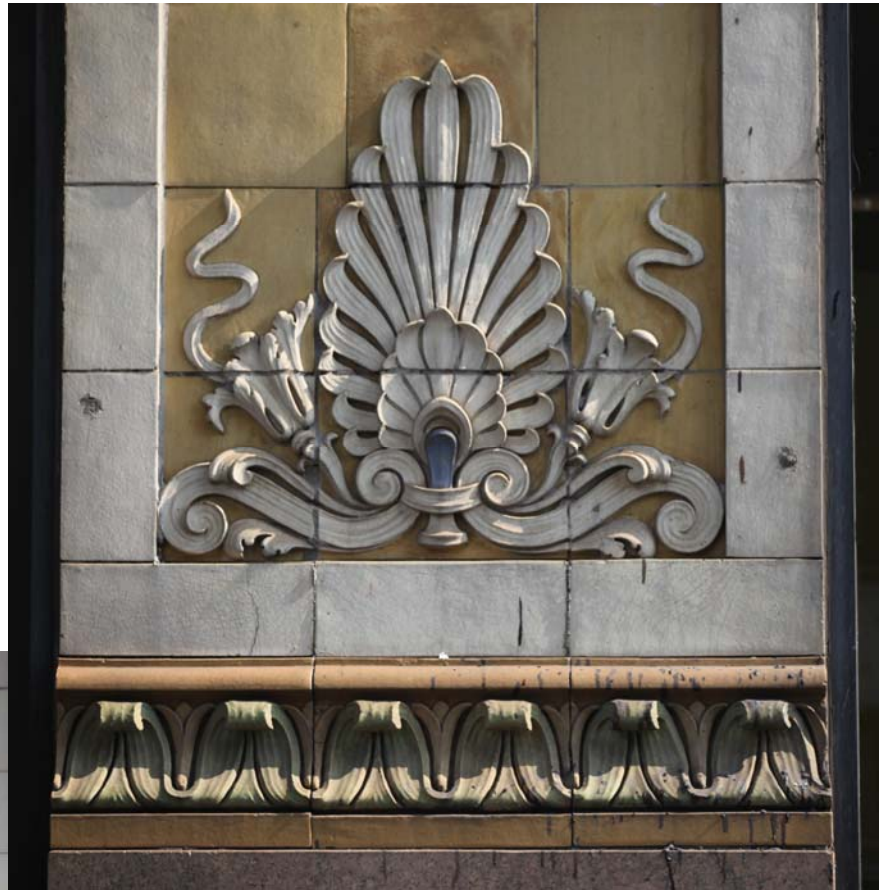
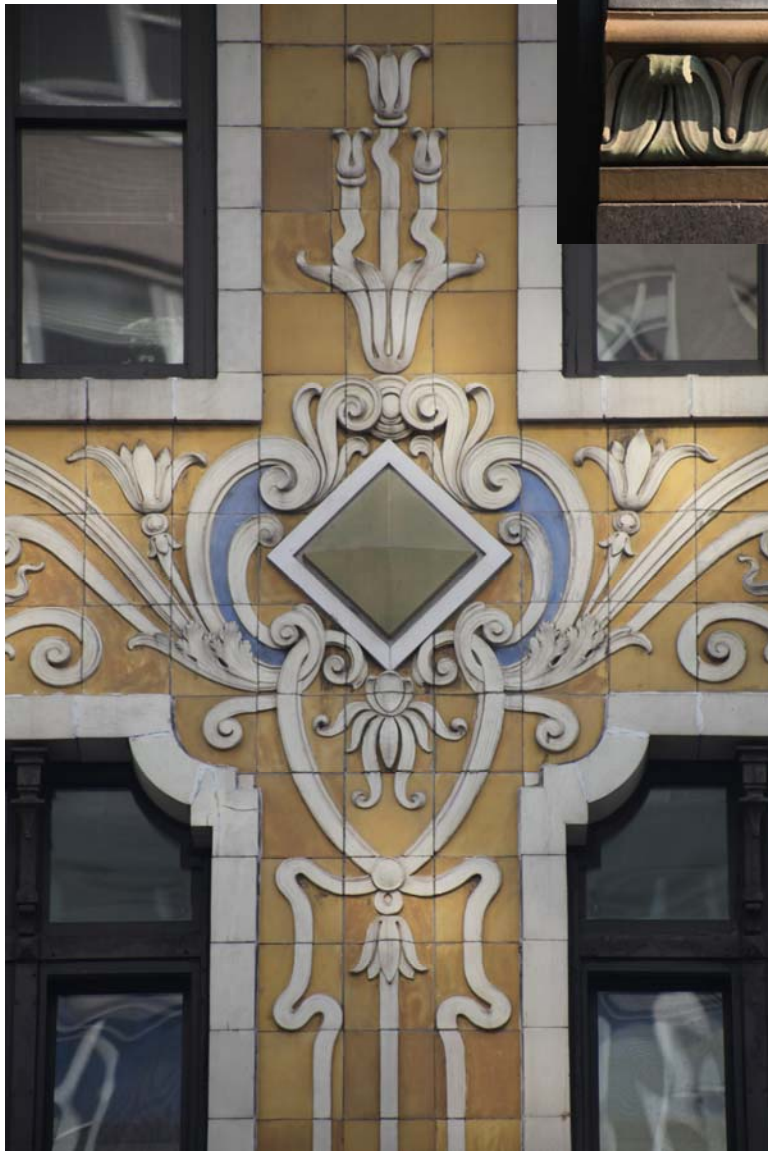
154 West 14th Street Building, 14th Street façade base

Photo: *Christopher D. Brazee* (2011)



154 West 14th Street Building, Seventh Avenue façade base

Photo: *Christopher D. Brazee* (2011)



154 West 14th Street Building,
terra-cotta details of base

Photos: *Christopher D. Brazee*
(2010)



154 West 14th Street Building,
terra-cotta details: midsection spandrel (upper) and cornice of base (lower)

Photos: *Christopher D. Brazee* (2010)



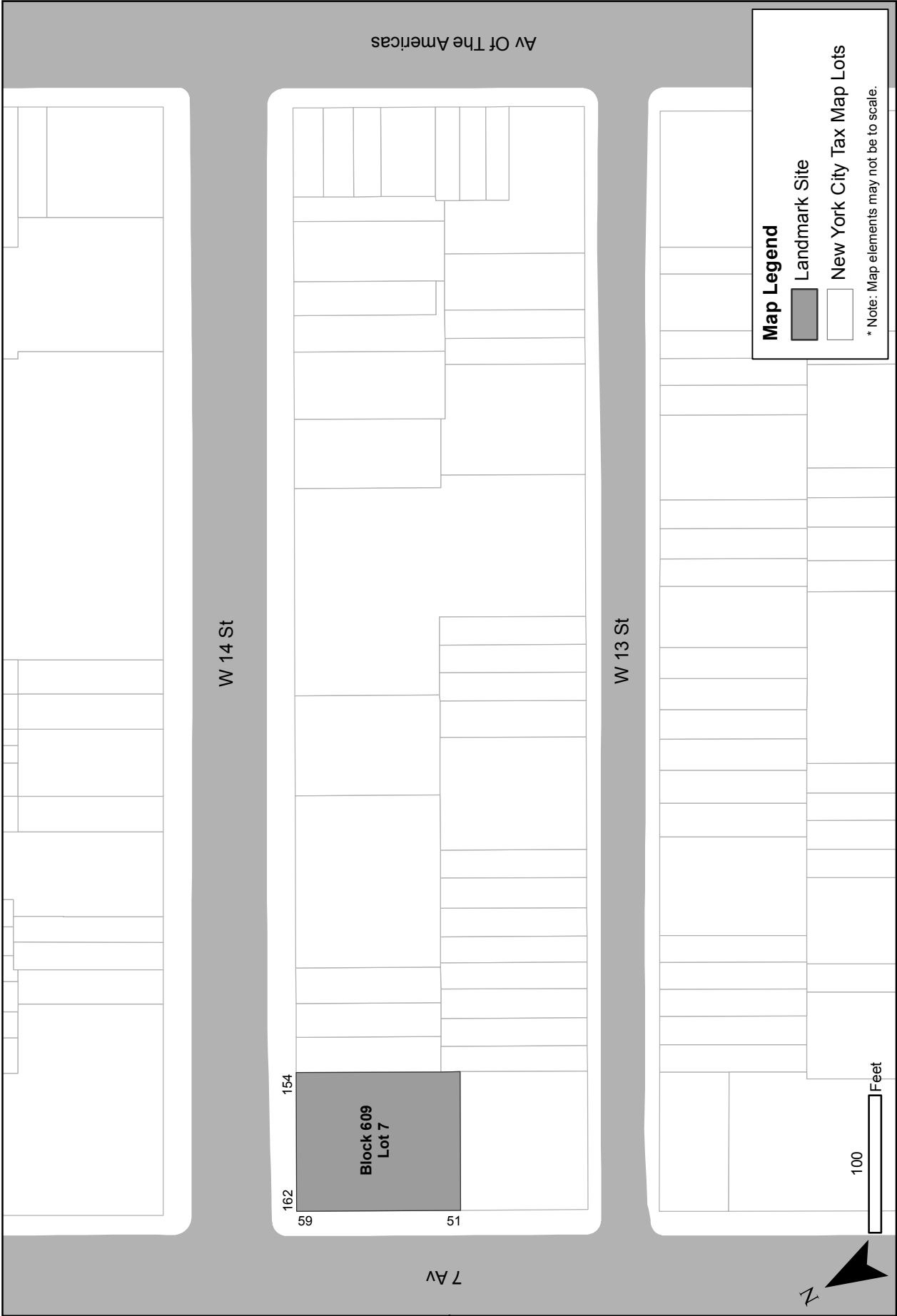
154 West 14th Street Building,
terra-cotta details of upper section

Photos: *Christopher D. Brazee* (2010)



154 West 14th Street Building, loading court on the south side

Photo: *Jay Shockley* (2011)



154 WEST 14TH STREET BUILDING (LP-2419), 154-162 West 14th Street (aka 51-59 Seventh Avenue)

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 609, Lot 7

Designated: June 28, 2011