

Heckscher Building (now the Crown Building)

**730 Fifth Avenue (aka 728-734 Fifth Avenue,
2-4 West 57th Street), Manhattan
Tax Map Block 1272, Lot 7503 (formerly 39) in part
BIN 1035053**

Built: 1920-22

Architect: Warren & Wetmore

Style: French Renaissance Revival

Proposed Action: Proposed for the Commission's Calendar



Heckscher Building (now the Crown Building), courtesy Aman Resorts

At the southwest corner of 57th Street, the former Heckscher Building (now the Crown Building) is one of Fifth Avenue's best known and most visible early skyscrapers. Topped by an octagonal tower and a steep pyramidal roof, this ornate setback structure was designed by Warren & Wetmore, architect of the New York Yacht Club, Grand Central Terminal, and the New York Central Building – all New York City landmarks. The Heckscher Building was commissioned by the Anahma Realty Corporation, a syndicate backed by developer August Heckscher, builder George Backer, and Warren & Wetmore partner, Charles D. Wetmore. Construction began in 1920 and was completed in 1922.

Twenty-five stories tall, the Heckscher Building has a nine-story base and a 21-story tower, with setbacks above the 13th and 24th floors. It was one of the earliest buildings to conform to the 1916 zoning resolution, which regulated the height and bulk of New York City buildings. Faced with limestone, buff brick, and bands of cream-colored terracotta, the style is French Renaissance Revival. The four-story pyramidal roof incorporates large dormer windows on each side, bull's eye windows, as well as an elaborate multi-story chimney stack and a rooster-shaped weathervane.

Planned as stores, show rooms and offices, the Heckscher Building was one of the first tall buildings in this part of Fifth Avenue, anticipating the area's transition from residential to commercial use in the 1920s. For several years, six rooms on the 12th floor were rented to the Museum of Modern Art, which held its inaugural exhibition here in November 1929, devoted to the painters Cezanne, Gauguin, Seurat, and Van Gogh, as well as *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, which attracted 33,000 people during six weeks in 1932.

The Heckscher Building was renamed the Crown Building in 1983. At this time most of the architectural elements were painted gold and the facade was illuminated at night. The upper floors of this prominent and richly decorated structure were converted to a hotel and residences in 2022.

