

CONSOLIDATED EDISON BUILDING, 4 Irving Place, (2-12 Irving Place, 121-147 East 14th Street, 120-140 East 15th Street), Manhattan., 1910-1911, Henry Hardenbergh, architect; additions: 1912-14, Henry Hardenbergh, architect; 1926-28; Warren & Wetmore, architects, Thomas E. Murray, Inc, engineers; 1928-29 Warren & Wetmore, architects, Thomas E. Murray, Inc, engineers. Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 870, Lot 24 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, excluding the 1915 addition at 142 East 15th Street and the parking lot to the east.

On October 28, 2008, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Consolidated Edison Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. A total of seven witnesses, including a representative of the owner, City Council member Rosie Mendez, and representatives of the Municipal Art Society, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Union Square Community Coalition, the Historic Districts Council, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, and Manhattan Community Board 6 spoke in favor of the designation. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation.

Summary

The Consolidated Edison Building, constructed in stages between 1910 and 1929 for the Consolidated Gas Company, predecessor to Consolidated Edison, and designed by the leading architectural firms of Henry Hardenbergh and Warren & Wetmore, is a monumental presence in the Union Square neighborhood and has one of the great towers that define the Manhattan skyline. The earliest sections of the building, on East 15th Street and the northern end of the block front on Irving Place, built in two phases between 1910 and 1914, were among the last major works of the eminent architect Henry Hardenbergh. Hardenbergh's eighteen-story, classically-inspired facades feature giant segmental arches and double-story porticos at the base and rusticated limestone piers balanced by strong horizontal moldings at the upper stories and are enlivened by a rich blend of Classical Revival and Renaissance motifs. Hardenbergh also incorporated an early and historically-significant program of nighttime illumination in his design, which is reflected in the presence of light sockets on the spandrel panels, soffits, upper-story window embrasures, and crowning cornice of the 1910s wing. Between 1926 and 1929, Warren & Wetmore working in association with the engineering firm of Thomas E. Murray built two more additions on Irving Place and East Fourteenth Street, wrapping eighteen-story office wings, which matched the Hardenbergh-designed portions of the building, around a signature twenty-six-story corner tower. This



Wurts Bros., c. 1930, Milstein Division of U.S History, Local History, and Genealogy, NYPL

monumental limestone-clad tower has a three-story colonnaded base and a setback tower featuring illuminated clocks, a bell chamber treated as colonnaded temple modeled on the Hellenistic Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, a bell-capped roof framed by corner obelisks, and a gigantic bronze-and-glass lantern. Characterized by the *New Yorker* as “a sturdy shaft, classic in detail and vigorous in silhouette,” the Consolidated Edison tower won critical praise and was among the finest of Warren & Wetmore’s late works. Dubbed the “Tower of Light” in corporate literature, the tower was intended to be both a symbol of one of the nation’s leading producers of power and light and a memorial to the company’s employees who had died in World War I and incorporates numerous devices in its decorative program such as torches and burning urns appropriate for a building associated with lighting and with funereal monuments. These dual purposes were also served by an elaborate program of nighttime illumination, inaugurated in July 1929. Although the lighting has been updated to reflect modern technology, the tower continues to be illuminated at night and remains in the words of the *New York Times* one of the “crowns of light [that] grace the skyline” and a symbol of Consolidated Edison, Inc. Consolidated Edison Inc. is the successor to a long line of power and light companies, beginning with New York Gas Light Company, founded 1823, which have played an integral role in the development of New York City. The Consolidated Edison and its predecessors, the Consolidated Gas Company of New York and New York Edison, have continuously been headquartered here since the building’s construction.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Early Development of the Union Square Neighborhood and the Manhattan Gas Light Company Site¹

In 1651 the Dutch West India Company conveyed to Peter Stuyvesant a vast tract of land extending from the Bowery to the East River between present-day East 3rd Street and modern-day East 30th Street together with a dwelling house, barns, woods, cows, horses, and “two young negroes.”² Stuyvesant’s heirs retained most of their real estate through eighteenth century,³ but sold several large parcels north of present-day Twelfth Street in the 1740s. One parcel, a thirty-three-acre tract lying east of the Bowery just north of present-day 14th Street, was acquired by merchant Cornelius Tiebout in 1748 and eventually passed to Tiebout’s stepson Cornelius T. Williams. The Consolidated Edison Building occupies the major portion of a block that was partially within the holdings of Cornelius T. Williams, partly within the holdings of Stuyvesant family, and partly within a large parcel assembled by auctioneer David Dunham in the early 1800s, principally from the farm of Boswell Dawson, a colonial-era butcher who was a slave owner.

In 1811, when the Commissioners’ Plan was adopted, establishing the street grid that characterizes Manhattan, this area was largely farmland. The Commissioners’ Plan provided for a public square called Union Place at the narrow fork where the Bowery met Broadway, just to the west of the Williams’ property. In 1832, additional land was acquired to regularize the park which opened to the public as Union Square in 1839. Fashionable houses had already begun springing up around the square including the rows of substantial dwellings developed by Samuel B. Ruggles on the east side of the square between 14th and 19th Streets. Ruggles also acquired and regulated the land to the north of Williams’ farm for a prime residential development centered on a private square, which he named Gramercy Park. In conjunction with these developments, Ruggles petitioned the New York State Legislature in 1832 to create a new north-south thoroughfare between Third and Fourth Avenues, running from 14th Street to 30th Street. Ruggles (who owned most of the land along the street and therefore was assessed for much of its cost) named the southern portion Irving Place, in honor of his friend Washington Irving; it was opened to 20th Street in 1833. The northern portion, named Lexington Avenue in commemoration of the Battle of Lexington, was opened in 1836.

Located midway between the fashionable residential enclaves of Union Square and Stuyvesant Square with frontages on Irving Place and two main commercial streets (Fourteenth Street and Third Avenue), this block was initially developed with a mix of residential, commercial, and public buildings. These included a group of houses on East 15th Street,⁴ the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church (founded 1846), and the University Medical College of the University of the City of New York (now NYU School of Medicine, built 1850) on East 14th Street. The prominent surgeon and pathologist Dr. James R. Woods, who was associated with the University Medical College, moved to a newly built mansion at 2 Irving Place in 1853. The Academy of Music, at the corner of East 14th Street and Irving Place, was constructed in 1853-54, to the design of architect Alexander Saeltzer. It had the largest seating capacity of any opera house in the world at that time and quickly became the center of musical and social life in New York. In 1854, the Manhattan Gas Light Company, which had begun building a new gas works plant and storage facility at the foot of 14th and 15th Streets between Avenues B and C, purchased several lots at the southeast corner of Irving Place and East 15th Street. There, the company constructed a richly embellished five-bay-wide Italian Renaissance Revival office building with its main entrance on Irving Place and a house for the company secretary Samuel Howard fronting onto East 15th Street (both completed 1856).⁵

In 1866 a fire erupted at the Academy of Music.⁶ The Academy and all of the other buildings on Fourteenth Street were destroyed and the church on Fifteenth Street was severely damaged, but the Manhattan Gas Light Company buildings were unscathed. The Academy replaced its building with a new opera house designed by architect Thomas R. Jackson in 1868. It remained the city's leading venue for opera and classical music until the construction of the Metropolitan Opera House in 1883 and was converted to theater in 1887. The Tammany political club purchased the medical college site and erected a new headquarters building on Fourteenth Street. The church was replaced by Nilsson Hall, an assembly hall connected to the Academy Building. In 1870, the Wood mansion became the first home of the Lotos Club, a private club for journalists, artists, musicians, and actors,⁷ and after 1876 served as the Brewers' Exchange. In 1884, the Manhattan Gas Light Company merged with five other gas companies to form the Consolidated Gas Company. The Manhattan Gas Company Light Building became the headquarters for the new company and the former Wood mansion/Lotos Club building was acquired to provide a residence for the president of Consolidated Gas.

Gas Lighting and Electric Lighting in New York City and the Consolidated Gas Company⁸

In 1823, the New York Gas Light Company was established to provide gas for street lamps and houses in Manhattan south of Grand Street. Demand quickly grew for gas lighting for homes, theaters, and businesses. In February 1826 the City Council Chamber was outfitted with gas lights and in 1828 the city began using its first gas street lamps. The Manhattan Gas Light Company was formed in 1830 and in 1833 was granted an exclusive franchise to operate in the portions of the city north of Grand Street. Initially, both companies were required to spend considerable amounts of money on infrastructure, laying mains and building power plants where fuels (principally coal) were burned to produce gas. As the city grew, both companies prospered. By the late 1840s, gas was well on its way to supplanting oil for street and interior lighting. In 1848 the Manhattan Company's franchise was renegotiated limiting its territory to the city south of 42nd Street.⁹ The Common Council passed a General Law for the Formation of Gas Light Companies "which made the granting of a charter to responsible persons more or less automatic."¹⁰ In 1855 the Harlem Gas Light Company was formed to serve the city north of 79th Street, particularly the villages of Harlem, Yorkville, Manhattanville, Carmansville, and Bloomingdale. The Metropolitan Gas Light Company was also formed in 1855 and in 1863 entered into an agreement with Manhattan Gas to take over the northern portion of the Manhattan Gas Company's franchise from 34th Street to 79th Street. The New York Mutual Gas Light Company was established in 1866 with strong financial backing from a group of financiers that included Joseph Seligman and Cornelius Vanderbilt. It operated in the same areas as the New York and Manhattan Gas Light companies using a naphtha-based process that produced a brighter light than that of older companies. Mutual soon became the company of choice for theaters, clubs, hotels, and department stores and was second only to the Manhattan Gas Light Company in total sales. A number of other companies were organized in the 1870s notably the Municipal Gas Light Company (organized 1876, franchise 1877). The Municipal used a new process known as water-gas that produced an extremely bright light at less cost than the older methods. A price war soon began which lasted until March 1880 when the New York, Manhattan, Mutual, and Municipal Gas Companies entered into an agreement to fix prices and pool a portion of their revenues. In 1884, yet another gas company was formed, the Equitable Gas Light Company, with strong financing from a group of powerful financiers headed by William Rockefeller. Faced

with new competition, the New York, Manhattan, Harlem, Knickerbocker, Metropolitan, and Municipal gaslight companies merged to form the Consolidated Gas Company.

Over the next fifteen years, Consolidated fostered the development of new inventions to increase the demand for gas and opened retail stores featuring gas appliances, principally cooking stoves. The company faced competition from two new gas companies, the Standard Gas Light Company, controlled by Russell Sage, and the New Amsterdam Gas Company, an amalgam of the Equitable and East River Gas Companies, financed by J.P. Morgan. A new rate war broke out in 1899 and ended with Consolidated absorbing the Standard and New Amsterdam Gas Companies in 1900. Consolidated subsequently acquired the New York and Queens Gas Company (1913) and New York Mutual Gas (1922), giving it complete control of the gas business in New York City except for Brooklyn.

During this period the infant electric industry was also beginning to take off. In 1878 the Avenue de l'Opera in Paris was lit with electric arc lamps.¹¹ In 1879 the Brush Electric Company first used arc lamps in the United States for street lighting in Cleveland. In 1880-81, the same company installed the first public electric lighting system in New York along Broadway between 14th Street and 34th Street, giving rise to the name "Great White Way." The company soon secured a contract for public street lighting and built the city's first central electric station at 133 West 25th Street.

Despite its early successes arc lighting was of limited utility because the intense light it produced was difficult to regulate. Several inventors had begun experimenting with incandescent lighting and in December 1879 Thomas Edison filed a patent for a glass bulb with a carbonized filament in a vacuum atmosphere which was recognized as the beginning of practical incandescent lighting. In 1880, with financing from J.P. Morgan, the Edison Electric Illuminating Company was established to build a model generating station on Pearl Street in Lower Manhattan and lay wiring to neighboring buildings. The Pearl Street Station began operating in September 1882 and included the *New York Times* among its first customers. By December, it had 203 customers and a year later 513. Edison began building additional generating plants in New York, Brooklyn, and other cities. Numerous electric companies were formed to compete with Edison.¹² In the late 1890s, Anthony N. Brady, who owned a controlling interest in a number of electric companies in the Albany region, began buying up small electric companies in New York City as well as the Excelsior Steam Power Company, which supplied steam power to buildings in Lower Manhattan. In 1898, Brady amalgamated these companies into an umbrella corporation under the name of the New York Gas & Electric Light, Heat & Power Company. In 1899, Consolidated Gas, fearful of competition from the electric companies, purchased controlling interests in Brady's firm, Edison Electric Illuminating, and the United Electric Light and Power Company (the third large electric company operating in New York City which had been founded by H.H. Westinghouse). In 1901, Consolidated Gas merged the three electric companies into the New York Edison Company. By 1910, it controlled most of the electricity generated in Manhattan and the western portion of the Bronx.

The Consolidated Gas Company Building, 1910-14¹³

By 1910, the Consolidated Gas Company had outgrown its old office building. The company had converted the former Lotos Club Building at 2 Irving Place and a former residence on East 15th Street for use as offices and was housing a number of its departments in nearby buildings.¹⁴ During this period many of the older buildings in the neighborhood were being replaced by new office buildings, including the Everett Building (1908, Starrett & Van Vleck) and the Germania Life

Insurance Company Building (1910-11, D'Oench & Yost) on the north side of East 17th Street at Park Avenue South. (Both are designated New York City Landmarks.) Consolidated Gas elected to replace its building with a new twelve-story office building designed by one of the country's leading architects, Henry Hardenbergh, who, a year earlier, had renovated a five-story building at 29 East 21st Street as showrooms for the company.¹⁵ To minimize the disruption to its business, the company opted to build the new building in two stages leaving its original headquarters building and the Lotos Club Building on Irving Place standing while it erected the first section of its new building on a sixty-two-foot-wide lot at 124-128 East 15th Street. Work began on the first section in January 1911 and was completed by late September 1911. By the time the first section was completed and the old offices were demolished, the company had decided to relocate the offices of its affiliates and subsidiary companies, notably the fast growing New York Edison Company, to its new building.¹⁶ Recognizing that a larger building would be needed, additional plots were acquired to the east on Fifteenth Street to extend the building for 300 feet along Fifteenth Street and plans were drawn to raise the building to eighteen stories with a nineteenth story penthouse to house the company cafeteria and executive dining rooms. Because the original twelve story section at the center of the building had not been framed to carry the weight of seven additional stories, a complicated system of trusses was designed to off-load the weight of the upper floors above the old wing onto the newer portions for the building. The complex engineering for this project was handled by the company's engineering department, under the supervision of W. Cullen Morris. The builder was the George A. Fuller Company, one of the foremost construction firms of the period, which had also been responsible for such major Hardenbergh buildings as the Whitehall Building (1902-04, 17 Battery Place, a designated New York City Landmark), Plaza Hotel (1905-07, 2 Central Park South, a designated New York City Landmark), and Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston (1912)

Henry J. Hardenbergh (1847-1918)¹⁷

Born in New Brunswick, New Jersey of Dutch lineage, Henry Janeway Hardenbergh attended the Hasbrouck Institute in Jersey City and received architectural training in the office of Beaux-Arts-trained Detlef Lienau in 1865-70. Hardenbergh, who began his own architectural practice in New York in 1870, became one of the city's most distinguished architects. Recognized for their picturesque compositions and practical planning, his buildings often took their design inspiration from the French, Dutch, Italian, and German Renaissance styles. Hardenbergh was a prolific architect and designed many types of buildings, including numerous country homes and city rowhouses, such as the picturesque rows on West 73rd Street (Nos. 15A-19, and Nos. 41-65 West 73rd Street, in the Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District) built in 1882 for Edward S. Clark. Some of Hardenbergh's best known designs are for luxury hotel and apartment houses, including the German Renaissance style Dakota Apartments (1880-84, 1 West 72nd Street, a designated New York City Landmark and located within the Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District), the Waldorf (1893-95, Fifth Avenue and West 33rd Street) and its addition, the Astoria (1895-97, Fifth Avenue and West 34th Street, both demolished), and the Plaza Hotel. His French-influenced American Fine Arts Society Building at 215 West 57th Street (1891-92, a designated New York City Landmark) and the seven Northern Renaissance style buildings in the Hardenbergh/ Rhinelander Historic District attest to the variety of his work.

Hardenbergh designed several important early office buildings in Manhattan, including the Western Union Telegraph Company Building at Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street (1884, located within the Ladies Mile Historic District), the Astor Building on Wall Street (1885, demolished), and an

early 12-story, steel-framed skyscraper, the Dutch Renaissance style John Wolfe Building at Maiden Lane and William Street (1895, demolished). As technology changed to allow taller buildings, Hardenbergh was able to adapt his designs to true skyscrapers. In both the Whitehall Building and this building, Hardenbergh created balanced and pleasing large-scale compositions while retaining the enriching details that continue to make his buildings so satisfying to observers.

The Consolidated Gas Company Building Design, 1910-14

Hardenbergh's initial twelve-story design for the Consolidated Edison Building employed rusticated limestone facades and a tripartite composition incorporating double-story segmental arches and cast iron storefronts at the base, a seven-story mid section with three window-wide bays set off by curved reveals and spandrel panels enriched with geometric designs, and a two-story crown with recessed windows set off by slender giant Ionic colonettes and spandrel panels embellished with cartouches. In adapting this design for a larger building, Hardenbergh moved the main entrance from Fifteenth Street to Irving Place. He had originally planned to articulate the Irving Place façade into four bays using the same design he had employed on Fifteenth Street. Instead he framed the facades with slightly projected corner pavilions and arranged the windows in a 3-1-3-1-3 pattern. A recessed portico with giant Ionic columns set in antis focused attention on the entrance at the center of the facade. At the center of the Fifteenth Street façade, he created a second portico articulated by giant Tuscan pilasters and a simple entablature. For the upper story addition, he eliminated the consoles from the original crowning cornice matching the remaining simple course with a cornice above the thirteenth story so that the floor became a transitional element in his design. It is likely that he also set this story apart to express its separate function, as it contained an auditorium used for company and public functions. The new upper stories were given a rich decorative treatment with giant stylized Ionic pilasters extending on the piers from the fourteenth to seventeenth story. Here the windows are framed by a decorative armature of cast iron mullions and spandrel panels and volutes and the window reveals and soffits are lined with decorative cast iron panels embellished with strapwork motifs. The eighteenth story features paired console brackets at the piers. These support the projecting console cornice, which was originally capped by a copper cresting of oversized acroteria.

Erected at a transitional moment in the evolution of American architecture, the Hardenbergh sections of the Consolidated Edison Building reflect aspects of the Beaux Arts, Neo-Renaissance, and Classical Revival styles. The influence of Beaux Arts style is most evident in the treatment of the handsomely detailed base with its giant segmental arch arcades and richly molded escutcheons that were originally designed to support iron torches with globe lights. The treatment of the intermediate stories (floors 4-7, the mid-section in his original tripartite design) is notable for employment of curving reveals, a feature derived from Baroque architecture that Hardenbergh had previously used in a more limited fashion at the Whitehall Building and here employed in a much freer non-historical manner to create an unusually modernistic, streamlined effect. The mixing of naturalistic rosettes and geometric patterns on the spandrel panels is also an unusually ahistorical feature for the period. The articulation of the upper stories is characterized by the richness of the Classical Revival and Renaissance decorations, which were executed on a large scale to be easily visible from a distance. In writing about another Hardenbergh building, the Plaza Hotel, Robert A. M. Stern also noted Hardenbergh's practice of using a restrained articulation for lower stories and "filigree" at the skyline describing it as a "masterful combination of *gemuetlichkeit* and Classical rigor."¹⁸

According to the *Record and Guide*, another “important special feature” of Hardenbergh’s design was its incorporation of “as interesting an example of decorative exterior lighting as has ever been attempted in New York City.”¹⁹ Nocturnal architectural illumination, in its infancy during this period, was primarily known to New Yorkers through the nighttime lighting at the Coney Island amusement parks, Luna Park (1903) and Dream Land (1904) (both demolished), and through the weeklong Hudson Fulton Celebration of 1909, when all of the East River bridges were illuminated with temporary outline lighting and major buildings such as the Singer Building and Plaza Hotel were floodlit.²⁰ The mansard roof of the Singer Tower (1905-08, Ernest Flagg, demolished) was regularly illuminated as was the tower of the Woolworth Building (1910-13, Cass Gilbert, a designated New York City Landmark). Power companies were at the forefront in adopting nighttime electrical illumination since their buildings provided a powerful demonstration of “how architectural illumination could be applied successfully in the urban context.”²¹ Here, Hardenbergh employed an elaborate scheme in which the outer edges of the window bays and spandrel panels were illuminated. Lamps were suspended from the modillions beneath the cornice and set into the copper acroteria that originally crowned the roof and two rooftop torches highlighted the roofline. In addition all of the ground story windows (many of which served as show windows for the gas company’s ground floor salesrooms) were illuminated.²² Although the company eliminated this lighting program in the 1920s, probably to avoid competition with the nighttime illumination of their newly constructed tower, reminders of this early and historically significant original lighting scheme are seen in mountings for lights that remain on the spandrel panels, soffits, decorative cast-iron frames lining the window embrasures and beneath the modillions of the rooftop cornice. In addition, certain features of Hardenbergh’s design may have been adopted to enhance the lighting program. These include the choice of material – a light colored limestone to reflect and diffuse light rather than the light-absorbing brick Hardenbergh had first envisioned for the project – and the curved window reveals, which also acted as light reflectors at night. One change Hardenbergh made, the elimination of all of the street level torches except for the lights flanking the principal entrances, probably was intended to focus attention on the shop windows.

The Additions of 1926-28 and 1928-29

When the Consolidated Gas Building was completed in 1914 it provided more space than was actually required for the company’s needs so that portions of several floors were leased to tenants for offices and showrooms.²³ In 1915 a two-story addition was constructed at 144 East 15th Street to the designs of the company’s engineering department for one of the company’s affiliates.²⁴ (The addition is not included in this designation.) In the 1910s and 1920s Consolidated Gas continued to acquire gas and electric companies extending its territory in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. The demand for electricity grew exponentially as it became the predominant source of power for lighting, industrial tools, and household gadgets. Improved technologies made gas desirable for heating and cooking and the boom in loft and office building created a demand for steam power, consequently all sectors of the business expanded rapidly. This created a need for additional office and showroom space in the company’s headquarters. In August 1925 Consolidated Gas acquired the Academy of Music Building at the southeast corner of Irving Place and East 14th Street with the intention of demolishing the historic opera house, which was then being used as a movie theater, and erecting a major addition to its headquarters.²⁵ The commission for the new addition was given to the architectural firm of Warren & Wetmore, which had already designed several branch offices for Consolidated Gas, and the engineering firm of T.E. Murray, Inc., specialists in the design and

construction of generating stations and boiler plants.²⁶ T.E. Murray, Inc. was given charge of letting the contracts and supervising construction of the building under the general direction of W. Cullen Morris, Chief of Engineering for the Consolidated Gas Company. Preliminary designs for the new building were ready by April 1926 and the former Academy of Music was demolished by August. Plans were filed with the Department of Buildings in October 1926; construction was completed by November 1928. In December 1927, the Tammany Democratic Club, which had long been thinking of moving to newer more commodious quarters, sold its building to Consolidated Gas. In September 1928, plans were filed for an addition on the former Tammany site to be carried out by the same design and construction team. The work was completed by November 1929. When completed the building contained “approximately one million square feet of floor space” and was “occupied by about seven thousand employees.”²⁷

Warren & Wetmore²⁸

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), at 37 West 44th Street. 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), 4 Park Avenue; and a number of luxury apartment houses, such as 903 Park Avenue (1912). Its cavernous Della Robbia Grill and Bar in the former Vanderbilt Hotel, featuring Guastavino vaulting and colorful Rookwood tiles, is an outstanding example of a ceramic interior and is a designated New York City Interior Landmark.

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), East 42nd Street and Park Avenue, 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), Vanderbilt Avenue and East 43rd Street; Commodore Hotel (1916-19, significantly altered), 125 East 42nd Street; Hotel Ambassador (1921, demolished); and New York Central Building (1927-29, a designated New York City

Landmark), 230 Park Avenue. The firm's later work displayed an increased interest in the "composition of architectural mass."²⁹ Prominent later commissions included the Heckscher Building (1920-21), 730 Fifth Avenue; the Plaza Hotel addition (1921); 2 Central Park South; Steinway Hall (1924-25, a designated New York City Landmark), 109-113 West 57th Street; the Aeolian Building (1925-27, a designated New York City Landmark), 689-691 Fifth Avenue; the Consolidated Edison Building additions (1926-29), 4 Irving Place; the Erlanger Stewart & Co. Building (1929, demolished), 721-25 Fifth Avenue. The Heckscher, Steinway, Aeolian, and Consolidated Edison Buildings 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.

T. E. Murray, Inc.³⁰

Born in Albany, engineer and inventor Thomas Edward Murray (1860-1929) worked as architectural draftsman and machinist's apprentice before becoming an operating engineer at the pumping plant of the Albany Waterworks. In 1887 Anthony Brady hired him to take charge of the Municipal Gas Company in Albany and he became a consultant to the other Brady operated utility companies in Troy and Albany. Murray was instrumental in Brady's move into the electric market in New York City and when the Brady's companies were consolidated into New York Edison Company, Murray became second vice-president and general manager. He was promoted to vice-president in 1913, senior vice-president in 1924, and eventually became vice-chairman of the board of the merged New York and Brooklyn Edison Companies.

As an inventor, Murray specialized in the fields of electrical and gas engineering. He held 1,100 patents, reportedly second only to Thomas Edison. In addition to his affiliation with Edison Electric he established and maintained general supervision over several corporations, including the Metropolitan Engineering Company, the Metropolitan Device Corporation, the Murray Radiator Company, and Thomas E. Murray, Inc. Thomas E. Murray, Inc. specialized in the design and construction of power plants. For many years it was the sole designer of power plants for the New York Edison and Brooklyn Edison Companies and, under Thomas E. Murray's supervision, the company was responsible for building many of the companies' great power stations including Waterside No. 1 and Waterside No. 2, Sherman Creek, Hell Gate, Gold Street, Hudson Avenue, and the East River stations, and the Williamsburg power house. Murray also designed hydro-electric plants in Chattanooga, Tennessee; Cohoes Falls, New York; and Trenton Falls, New York; and steam power plants in Albany; Utica; Rochester; Dayton, Ohio; and Nitro, West Virginia.

Such projects required a large firm employing several hundred engineers and architects. Thomas E. Murray's sons John F. Murray, and Thomas E. Murray, Jr., who were also engineers, were officers in the firm, and following their father's death in 1929, Thomas E. Murray, Jr. became chairman of the board.³¹ By that point Edison Electric had established its own in-house architectural and engineering department employing about 150 former staff members from T.E. Murray, Inc.³²

Warren & Wetmore's Design for the additions of 1926-28 and 1928-29

In designing the new addition to the Consolidated Gas/Edison Building, Warren & Wetmore opted for a solution that had been used for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company complex on Madison Square (1892, tower 1907-09; both Napoleon Le Brun & Sons; tower a designated New York City Landmark) in which a block of moderately high offices wrap around a monolithic square

corner tower. Here, Warren & Wetmore replicated Hardenbergh's 1912 design with some simplification in the detailing for the eighteen-story portions of the building on Irving Place and Fourteenth Street. The twenty-six-story tower, which the *New Yorker* characterized as "a sturdy shaft, classic in detail and vigorous in silhouette,"³³ features a three-story Doric colonnade at its base, a set back tower adorned at the corners with rusticated bands and stylized Doric entablatures, and a monumental crown comprised of a podium with illuminated clock faces set off by corner tripods supporting flaming amphorae, a colonnaded temple inspired by the Hellenistic Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, that served as a bell chamber for four giant bells, a bell cap roof framed by corner obelisks, and a gigantic bronze-and-glass lantern. The new addition won critical praise for its use of the very finest materials, notably the limestone cladding, extending "from the base to top" laid in "massive blocks measuring approximately four feet in each dimension."³⁴ The *New Yorker* was struck by "how well the tower hooks on ...to the adjacent structures," and by the "ingenious" handling of the setbacks.³⁵ The *Architect* praised the level of detailing, quality of design, and concern with creating a monumental terminus, which it said "made this a building of unusual merit and distinction."³⁶

Because few buildings were constructed in New York City during World War I and the following recession, tall buildings erected in the early-mid 1920s, such as the Consolidated Edison Tower, were among the first to reflect the provisions of the 1911 Zoning Resolution, including the setbacks on the upper stories. Skyscraper architects became in the words of architect Harvey Wiley Corbett "sculptors in building masses."³⁷ Warren & Wetmore was particularly well known for its picturesque towers and the Consolidated Edison tower was among the finest of the firm's late works. To a certain extent it shares a decorative vocabulary with the firm's other business buildings of the period. Both the Tower Building, (1923-26), at 200 Madison Avenue, and Steinway Hall (1924-25) incorporate temple-like pavilions modeled after the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. The curving corners of the podium recall the curved and angled treatment of the upper floors of the Aeolian Building (1925-27). Urns and tripods also punctuate the skyline at Steinway Hall and the Aeolian Building and all of the firm's major late skyscrapers — the Tower Building, Steinway Hall, the Aeolian Building, the Consolidated Edison Building, and the New York Central Building (now Helmsley Building, 230 Park Avenue, 1927-29, a designated New York City Landmark) — are capped by tapering roofs crowned by lanterns or baldachins. At the Consolidated Edison Building, the decorative features and massing are handled with classical simplicity and unusual boldness, making the building a dramatic addition to the city's skyline.

In addition, the ornament served a programmatic function. Dubbed the "Tower of Light" in corporate literature, the Consolidated Edison tower was intended to be iconic, serving as a symbol of one of the nation's leading purveyors of power and light and as a memorial to the many employees and officers of the Consolidated Gas Company and its affiliates who gave their lives in World War I. Symbolizing the company's role as the headquarters of a power company, the decoration incorporates several devices associated with flames, lighting, and power. At the base of the tower these include torches, lamps, and urns on the original canopy at the main entrance on Irving Place and torches, suns, candelabra, Jupiter heads, and lightning bolts on the frieze over the first-story shop windows. Sculptural reliefs, used in place of triglyphs on the cornice capping the third story, mingle depictions of power-generating equipment with smoking urns, burning torches, thunderbolts, and emblems of Mercury, god of commerce, who conducts Persephone from the underworld each spring and thus is associated with the yearly cycle of death and regeneration. The top of the tower features sculptural ornament in the form of burning urns set on tripods, obelisks, and the crowning

lantern. Urns are associated with the Greco-Romano practice of cremation and the display of ashes and would have been particularly appropriate for a memorial building. Obelisks initially served a commemorative function and were widely used for funerary monuments, and thus enhanced the commemorative aspect of the design. Moreover, as one of the famous funereal monuments of classical antiquity, the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, was a recognizable and particularly apt prototype.

The dual role of the tower in symbolizing power and light and creating a memorial was also served by an elaborate program of nighttime illumination, first inaugurated on July 3, 1929.³⁸ To the *Architect* the memorial function of the tower was “beautifully expressed” by the gigantic lantern of solid bronze, through which a searchlight threw “a brilliant beam of light upward” while similar horizontal beams through the sides of the lantern “marked the cardinal points of the compass,” thus sending “to the heavens and to the four corners of the earth ... its message of memory and inspiration.”³⁹

Back of the noble colonnade, which is a feature of the upper part of the tower, a night display of slowly changing lights weaves a shimmering tapestry which passes through every color in the spectrum. Meanwhile the face of the columns and entire shaft of the tower glow with the reflection of concealed flood-lights. Truly may it be said that this fine memorial is “a pillar of fire by night.”⁴⁰

For the WPA *New York City Guide*, the “mausoleum-like tower, [rising] 531 feet above the square; its bright lights, visible for miles, and the illuminated dial of the great clock below, are welcome landmarks.”⁴¹ To W. Parker Chase, writing in *New York: the Wonder City*, this was simply “one of the most beautiful and magnificent structures in the United States.”⁴²

Later History

By 1932 the Consolidated Gas Company was “the largest company in the world providing electrical service.”⁴³ In 1936, in recognition of the predominant role electricity played in its business and in anticipation of changes to its corporate structure, Consolidated Gas became the Consolidated Edison Company of New York. Thereafter, this building became known as the Consolidated Edison Building.⁴⁴

After World War II, Consolidated Edison continued to acquire new affiliates and power plants and by the 1960s, “it provided electricity to all of New York City, except the Rockaways; gas to Manhattan, the Bronx and part of Queens; and steam to part of Manhattan.”⁴⁵ It also provided service to most of Westchester County. In 1955, it was among the first companies to take advantage of the new technology of atomic power, beginning operation of its Indian Point plant in 1962. It experienced a crisis in 1973-74 during the OPEC oil embargo. The sale of two generating plants to New York State helped restore the company’s finances and by the late 1970s it was one of the most efficient and profitable utilities in the country. In 1997 the company began a five-year process of deregulation. As part of the process, it reorganized in 1998, under a new holding company, Consolidated Edison, Inc. In 1999, it once again expanded its territory with the acquisition of Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc., which operated in southeastern New York and adjacent sections of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. It remains “one of the largest investor-owned energy companies in the United States with approximately \$13 billion in annual revenues and \$30 billion in assets.”⁴⁶ Today this building still remains the headquarters of Consolidated Edison, Inc. Over the years the company has rented portions of its ground floor commercial space to tenants, among them the

National City Bank Deposit Company, later First National City Bank, which had a branch at 135 West 14th Street, prior to moving to Con Edison's original showrooms at 10 Irving Place in 1936.⁴⁷ The bank branch was bombed in November 1975, perhaps by the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña (FALN), shattering glass in the front door and windows on the first and second floors, but causing no injuries.⁴⁸ Presently, the New York Sports Club, Apple Bank, and Raymour & Flanigan furniture occupy the ground story commercial space.

Since the Warren & Wetmore additions during the 1920s, there have been some alterations but overall the facades remain unusually intact retaining almost all of the original storefronts and entrance surrounds, historic windows, decorative metalwork, and sculpture. Changes have included coating the masonry portions of the building with an acrylic emulsion in 1965-66;⁴⁹ removal of the original central marquee and construction of stainless steel-and-glass infill and entrances in the center and tenth bay (reading east to west) on the Fifteenth Street façade in 1954,⁵⁰ removal of some original street level lighting fixtures, installation of some non-historic signage and awnings, the addition of mechanical equipment above the third story tower setback, installation of cooling towers and antennas on the roof, and the replacement of some windows with non-historic lights and louvers, especially on the east wall facing Third Avenue. Between 1997 and 2001 the façade and especially the tower underwent a number of restorative repairs. During the 1990s and again in 2008 the exterior lighting scheme was updated with more energy-efficient fiber optic cable replacing light bulbs.⁵¹ Today, in the words of the *New York Times*, the Consolidated Edison Building remains one of the “crowns of light” [that] grace the skyline.”⁵²

Description

Built in stages between 1910 and 1929, to the designs of Henry Hardenbergh and Warren & Wetmore, the classically-inspired Consolidated Edison Building is located on Tax Map Block 870, Lot 24, in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, excluding the 1915 addition at 142 East 15th Street and the parking lot to the east. The building has frontages of about 207 feet on Irving Place, 320 feet on East 14th Street, and approximately 197 feet on East 15th Street. It is eighteen stories tall, with a setback nineteenth-story penthouse extending over most of the building, smaller penthouses rising to twenty, twenty-one stories, and twenty-two stories and a square tower rising to 513 feet at the northeast corner at Irving Place and East 14th Street. The three major facades and tower are clad in limestone, which has been painted. The brick eastern elevation, facing the parking lot and Third Avenue, has been painted and is patched in places with stucco. The penthouses are faced with stucco on the street fronts and have designed facades. The penthouses on the older northern wing of the building have molded copper cornices. Except for the tower, the designed facades are articulated into 3-7-2-1-4-1 story groupings, defined by projecting cornices and in some cases by continuous pilasters. The bay articulation varies on each façade, with the windows grouped into single and triple bays. The tower has a three-story colonnaded base, sets back to a twenty-one-story mid-section, and is crowned by a campanile, comprised of a podium with clock faces, columned bell chamber, bell-shaped roof, and bronze-and-glass lantern. The building retains most of its original storefront infill including cast-iron grilles, window sills, slender metal mullions and transom bars, decorative cast-iron spandrel panels, copper-clad wood window surrounds, historic bronze-and-glass doors, and the original metal canopy decorated with torches, lamps, and urns at the tower entrance on Irving Place. There are two non-historic steel-and-glass entries dating from the mid-1950s on East 15th Street and three non-historic anodized-aluminum-and-glass entrances on East 14th Street. Non-historic awnings have been installed above the storefronts along

the Irving Place, East 14th Street, and the western end of the East 15th Street facades. The upper stories of the 15th Street façade and the north side of the Irving Place façade, constructed 1910-14, retain their original copper-clad wood frames and one-over-one copper-clad wood-sash windows. The upper stories on Irving Place and East 14th Street of the 1920s addition retain their original one-over-one copper windows. The north side of the eastern elevation, dating from 1912-14, retains most but not all of its historic three-over-three copper-covered wood sash windows, which have been painted. The angled and northern sections of the east wall, dating from 1928-29, still have many of its historic three-over-three copper windows, which are painted. Setback penthouses extend along all three of the designed facades and are highly visible from Third Avenue. Balustraded parapets at the edge of the roofline on the designed facades partially screen the penthouses from view. Non-historic mechanical equipment has been installed on the setback at the base of the tower and several non-historic cooling towers and other non-historic structures have been constructed on the roof. The tower retains its iconic form and continues to be illuminated; however, modern fiber optic cables have replaced the original lighting.

The Irving Place façade encompasses the 115-foot-wide frontage of the eighteen-story main block and the 92-foot-wide frontage of the twenty-six-story tower.

Main block: The facade is arranged into seven alternating wide (triple-window-wide) and narrow (single-window-wide) bays. Although this facade has a unified design, the five northern bays are part of the original Hardenbergh 1910-14 building while the southern two bays are part of the Warren & Wetmore 1926-29 addition. This is reflected in the off-center placement of the entrance portico and the projection of the first and fifth bays, which read as framing pavilions in the original Hardenbergh design.

Base: Above a granite water table, the three-story base is clad in smooth-faced chamfered rusticated limestone blocks. The first and second stories are articulated with giant segmental arches containing metal-and-glass storefronts in bays 1, 5, and 7 (reading north to south). Beaux Arts style stone escutcheons ornament the wide piers between the arches. A recessed entrance portico with giant Doric pilasters, giant Ionic columns set in antis, and an Ionic entablature spans bays 2-4. Narrower, bay 6 is a single double-height square-headed opening with a cast-iron spandrel separating the first and second story windows. At the third story, the trabeated window openings are arranged in a 2-1-3-1-2-1-2 pattern with wide piers decorated with square panels defining the bays. The storefronts at the first story have metal bulkheads that incorporate decorative grilles and are enriched with dentils and bosses. The historic show windows are divided by slender metal mullions into wide center lights and narrower sidelights with similarly arranged multi-light transoms above. The metal spandrel panels between the first and second story windows are enriched with tablets and garlands. The historic second story windows also have a tripartite arrangement and retain their original transoms but are framed by heavier metal mullions and transom bars. The third story windows retain their original copper-covered one-over-one sashes.

There is a non-historic light fixture extending at an angle from the northwest corner of the building at the second story. Non-historic awnings with the logo of the New York Sports Club have been installed above the first story show windows in **bays 1 and 5**. The north pier of **bay 1** has a non-historic metal sign reading “Consolidated Edison Company of New York.”

Both of the pilasters framing the **portico** have non-historic metal signs for the NYSC and retain historic mountings for no longer extant light fixtures. Within the recessed entrance porch, which provides access to the gym, the columns are echoed by giant Doric pilasters on the entry wall. The remainder of the wall is an intricately detailed bronze-and-glass screen with bronze-and-glass

side doors ornamented with polished strips and disks. The paired anodized aluminum-and-glass center doors and the metal armature, which is affixed to the stone pilasters and supports a non-historic metal oval sign for NYSC, are non-historic. The stone side walls are coffered and have been painted. The coffered ceiling is original and retains its original mounts for hanging lights, although the current globe lights are non-historic. The polished marble and unpolished granite paving is also original. Two non-historic floodlights rest on the top ledge of the portico. A metal flagpole, in place since the 1930s, also rests on the ledge above the portico and is supported by wires anchored to the piers framing the center third-story window bay.

The articulation of **bay 5** is identical to that of bay 1 except that it contains a historic bronze night deposit safe in the lower part of the south sidelight bay. The side transom windows retain their original multipane windows. The center transom window has non-historic replacement lights. A non-historic sign regarding a sidewalk standpipe has been attached to the base of the north pier in this bay.

Both **bay 6 and bay 7** in the 1920s Warren & Wetmore addition are very similar in design to the older sections of the façade. Here, however, the stone escutcheons ornamenting the piers are simplified and the metal grilles beneath the first story windows were designed with fire hose mounts.

Narrow **bay 6** retains its original single pane windows topped by transoms. A non-historic metal sign regarding the standpipe has been attached to the base of the south face of the north pier.

At **bay 7**, the center transom window has been replaced with non-historic infill. There is a non-historic metal sign regarding the standpipe near the base of the south face of the north pier. A non-historic Consolidated Edison Company sign is affixed to the pier between bays 7 and 8.

Above the entablature that crowns the third story is a seven-story section with limestone cladding laid in rusticated bands. The three-window-wide bays are set off by curved reveals. The recessed stone spandrel panels beneath the windows are ornamented with geometric designs and rosettes. In the northern 1910s [Hardenbergh] bays, the center rosettes in the wide bays retain their historic sockets for the building's original exterior lighting scheme. Above the cornice that caps the seven-story section, is a two-story grouping with recessed windows set off by slender giant Ionic colonettes and spandrel panels embellished with cartouches. The coffers above the twelfth story windows in the 1910 bays contain recesses for lights that are remnants of the original lighting scheme. At the thirteenth story the wide piers are embellished with square panels outlined by garlands and enriched by central rosettes. The deeply recessed windows are separated by stone mullions and the coffering above the windows contains mounts for lights in the 1910s bays. The thirteenth story is crowned by a simple cornice. The fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth stories are grouped together with giant stylized pilasters decorating the piers. Here the recessed windows are framed by a decorative armature of cast-iron mullions and spandrel panels and volutes. In the 1910s bays the window reveals and soffits are lined with decorative cast-iron panels embellished with strapwork motifs. Both the reveals and soffits incorporate mountings for lights into their designs. The eighteenth story features paired console brackets at the piers. These support the projecting console cornice, which incorporates mountings for lights. Originally the cornice was capped by a copper cresting of oversized acroteria. In the 1920s Warren & Wetmore replaced the acroteria with balustraded parapets. All of the windows on the upper stories appear to retain their original copper-clad calamine one-over-one sash. Although the exterior lights that were originally incorporated into this design have not been used since the 1920s, the mountings are a significant reminder of an early use of nighttime illumination as an element of design.

The Penthouse: Near the Irving Place façade, the penthouse, which extends over the northern [Hardenbergh] wing, is one-and-one-half-stories high and has a low gabled roof. It is faced with stucco, and originally had square-headed window openings. The southern four window bays retain their original form. The northern half of the façade has been reconfigured with two large openings each containing three windows or doors. Above a simple belt course, the gabled attic portion of façade is articulated with a paneled frieze. A heavy firewall with a high parapet extends along the south face of the penthouse separating the Hardenbergh portion of the main block roof from the Warren & Wetmore addition. Recessed well back behind the Hardenbergh penthouse is the west wall of a one-story penthouse for a corridor linking the penthouse to the base of the tower. Originally the west façade of this low penthouse was articulated with an arched motif but it now appears to be unarticulated.

South face Main Block: Because of the tower setback above the southern face of the main block is visible above the third story. Here the wall is lit by a pair of windows and the decorative articulation matches the Warren & Wetmore bays on the Irving Place façade of the main block.

The Tower

The tower's three-story base has six fluted limestone Doric columns resting on granite plinths and a limestone Doric entablature featuring sculptural panels in place of triglyphs. These are embellished with classical emblems relating to light, power, and commerce. Between the columns is the original bronze-and-glass wall/screen, which is fitted up for storefronts and is richly decorated with raised panels, rosettes, and delicate classical friezes decorated with light-related emblems including suns, lamps, candelabra, lightning rods and torches. The ground floor shop fronts rest on stone slabs and project forward between the columns. They are surmounted by tripartite transoms. The second and third story windows have large central single lights flanked by one-over-one sidelights. At the first and second story the windows are capped by similarly arranged horizontally pivoting transoms, now painted. In **bay 8**, the entry retains its original bronze canopy ornamented with torches, lamps, and urns. The three bronze-and-glass doors surmounted by transoms are historic, perhaps original. Non-historic changes to the base include the use of painted advertising on the shop window and transom of **bay 9**, on the transom of **bay 10 and bay 11**, and the storefront window of **bay 12**. A non-historic illuminated sign also rests on the top of the shop window in bay 12. A bronze flagpole, in place since the 1950s, is suspended from brackets above the second story window in bay 8. Because the cornice extends several feet above the roofline forming a parapet, it partially screens from view the non-historic mechanical equipment and metal armature that have been installed on the roof. A non-historic light fixture extends over the cornice parapet at the southeast corner of the base.

The twenty-one story setback midsection of tower is adorned at the corners with rusticated bands terminating at the twenty-fourth story in moldings based on stylized Doric entablatures. On the rusticated corner bays the windows are slightly recessed. In the six center bays the windows are grouped into pairs separated by wide piers. The spandrels and windows are recessed to emphasize the verticality of the tower. All of the windows contain historic one-over-one copper sash. Non-historic metal pipe rails extend in front of the base of the fourth-story windows but they are concealed by the cornice. There do not appear to have been any significant alterations on this portion of the façade except for the limestone having been painted.

Campanile: At the base of the campanile there is a single transitional story with square-headed windows containing one-over-one metal sash. This story serves as the base for podium with beveled corners, which curve around ornamental stone tripods supporting flaming stone urns.

Floodlights are concealed behind the tripods and are used to illuminate the tower at night. Each side of the podium has a clock face measuring 21 feet, 9 inches in diameter. The perimeter of the clocks is bordered by stone egg-and-dart moldings. Large metal Arabic numerals are attached to the stone face of the clock. The minutes are marked by circles and the 5-minute points by rectangles which have bronze frames. At night all the minute markers are lit by lights set behind glass covers. The bronze clock hands are also illuminated. Atop the clock, is the bell chamber recessed behind a colonnade of four giant Ionic columns. The bell chamber wall is pierced by two tiers of windows. These retain their original bronze grilles based on Greek prototypes. Original matching railings extend between the columns since this was also intended to be a viewing platform. The colonnade was originally and on occasion continues to be illuminated at night. The limestone-clad bell-shaped roof above the belfry is set off by stone obelisks resting on pedestals. This roof is capped by a bronze-and-glass lantern, richly embellished with cresting and scrolled brackets. The lantern was originally and often continues to be illuminated at night.

The East 14th Street façade encompasses the 92-foot-wide frontage of the tower and the 228-foot-wide frontage of the eighteen-story main block.

The Tower

The articulation of the tower façade is identical to that of the Irving Place façade, except on the ground story, which historically had no entry. Currently, there is a non-historic entry in bay 1 (reading west to east). Non-historic louvers have replaced some of the ground floor transoms and there is some non-historic signage. The upper stories of the tower are largely unchanged except for some visible replacement of the limestone cladding on the west end of the clock wall.

Base: In **bay 1**, the original show window has been replaced by a non-historic anodized aluminum-and-glass storefront with paired doors, sidelights (the eastern sidelight contains an ATM card entry machine), and transoms. A non-historic illuminated sign also rests on the top of the shop window. **Bay 2** remains largely unchanged except that the central grilled panel of the bulkhead beneath the shop window has been covered over or replaced with non-historic cladding and there is non-historic painted advertising on the shop window glass and the center transom. **Bay 3** also has advertising painted on the center transom window. In **bays 4 and 5** the transoms have been replaced by non-historic louvers.

Main Block

The facade is arranged into sixteen alternating narrow (single-window-wide) and wide (three-window-wide) bays. Although this facade has a unified design, the seven western bays are part of the Warren & Wetmore 1926-28 addition while the eastern nine bays were added in 1928-29. This and certain functional requirements of the plan account for the original asymmetrical placement of the entrances and the projection of the sixth and twelfth bays, which read as framing pavilions for the original 1926-28 facade. Similarly, the easternmost triple bay of the 1928-29 addition (bay 20 reading west to east and including the five tower bays in the numeration) is projected to form a termination for the eastern end of the façade. Aside from these variations in the arrangement of bays, the decorative treatment echoes the design employed for the Warren & Wetmore sections of the main block on Irving Place. As on Irving Place there is a setback penthouse, with a designed façade. The penthouse is partially screened from view by a balustraded parapet.

Base: Some new entries have been created on the ground story and non-historic awnings have been installed above the show windows in the triple bays but the base remains largely intact. Non-historic louvers have been installed in the transoms of several ground story window bays. In

bay 6 (reading west to east and including the five tower bays in the numeration) the original show window has been replaced by a non-historic anodized-aluminum-and-glass entry with paired doors, sidelights, and tripartite transoms. A non-historic sign has been installed above the entry. In **bay 8** a non-historic sign has been attached to the east face of the west pier and the ground story transoms have been replaced with non-historic louvers. **Bay 11**, which reads as a single bay above the base, was originally designed as an entrance bay, and therefore is somewhat wider at the base. It seems probable that it was changed to a window bay when the 1928-29 wing was added since its metal storefront matches the other original storefronts. In **bay 12** the center and eastern ground story transoms have been replaced with non-historic metal louvers. A historic bronze commemorative plaque, recognizing this site as the former location of the Academy of Music and Tony Pastor's Theater, has been affixed to the granite base of the pier between **bays 12 and 13**. **Bay 13** has a non-historic louver in place of the ground story transom. Narrow **Bay 15** was originally an entrance bay and retains its original low granite stoop. The present plate-glass window and metal grate and louver above the show window are non-historic. **Bay 16** has metal louvers in place of transoms. **Bay 18** has one large louver in place of the wide center transom. **Bay 19** was also originally an entry; however, the recessed door has been replaced by a window flush with the façade and the steps have been removed and replaced by a stone bulkhead. The window is surmounted by a metal louvered vent protected by a metal grate in the upper part of the opening. **Bay 20** was designed as a recessed porch entry to a ground floor commercial space. It retains its original granite stoop, historic metal railings, historic granite revetments on the side and rear walls and historic polished bronze-and-glass entry with paired doors, narrow sidelights, and mullions. The words "New York Telephone" and a bell have been engraved into the sidewalls at either side of the entry. The wide fascia over the entry appears in the drawing for this façade; however, the present metal facings and drop ceiling with recessed lights are non-historic. A bronze flagpole, in place since the 1950s, is suspended from brackets above the second story window in bay 20. A non-historic metal Con Edison sign and a non-historic sign relating to the sprinkler head have been attached to the pier between **bays 20 and 21**. **Bay 21** was designed as a service entrance. It retains its historic paired bronze-and-glass doors. The diamond-pattern wrought-iron grate over the transom also appears to be original, but, the aluminum housing for a roll-down gate above the doors is non-historic. A non-historic light fixture has been attached to the corner of the easternmost pier just above the ground story entry.

Upper Stories: The upper stories remain unchanged except for the limestone having been painted

West face Main Block: Because of the tower setback the western face of the main block is visible above the third story. Here the wall is lit by a pair of windows and the decorative articulation matches the south face of the main block on the Irving Place façade. There do not appear to have been any significant alterations on this façade except for the masonry having been painted.

Penthouse: The setback penthouse extends from the east wall of tower to the east end of the building. It steps towards the center of the building rising at some points to three stories. It is most visible from the southeast, across Third Avenue south of 14th Street. The portion of the penthouse closest to the roofline houses a cafeteria and auditorium. It is only one story high and has a designed façade, which is faced with stippled stucco and articulated with paneled decorations. Paired arched windows are set off by limestone pilasters and a limestone Doric cornice. Several small openings have been cut into the cornice between the triglyphs. The cornice is capped by a parapet with recessed panel decorations and limestone copings. The arched windows originally contained multipane sashes with radiating top lights. The eastern bays now appear to be sealed. Cooling

equipment has been installed on the setback between the parapet and the western window bays. The taller stories of the penthouse are faced with brick, which has been stuccoed and/or painted. They were originally lit by three-over-three metal sash windows. Some windows have been replaced. Five cooling towers have erected on a steel armature at the middle of the east end of the penthouse roof while the water towers are located near the center of the building. A large non-historic structure containing a fan room occupies the west side of the roof next to the tower. The fan room structure is faced with corrugated metal and topped by metal pipe rails. There are also elevator and stair towers and great deal of ductwork, pipe rails, ladders, and antennas.

The East 15th Street façade reflects the alterations and additions Henry Hardenbergh made to the building in 1912-14 incorporating the original 1910-12 three bay section of the building. The façade is arranged into fifteen three-window-wide bays with a single one-window-wide bay for a service entry and stair tower at the eastern end of the façade. The changes in plan are reflected in the slightly asymmetrical location of the main entrance portico, which spans bays 7-9 (reading east to west) and the location of a secondary entry in bay 11. The decorative articulation matches that of the Hardenbergh-designed portions of the Irving Place facade, except for the easternmost service bay, which is slightly recessed, has paired mezzanine windows between the first and second stories, and is lit by unadorned square-headed windows on the upper stories. The major changes to the 15th Street façade were the removal of the original bronze-and-glass entrance canopy spanning bay 8 and the replacement of the original entrances in bay 8 and bay 11 with non-historic steel-and-glass doors and infill during the 1950s. Non-historic awnings have been installed above the shop windows at bays 12-16.

Base: In **Bay 1** of the base (reading east to west) the service entrance is capped by a bracketed triangular pediment. The entry retains its historic paired metal-and-glass doors. There is a non-historic sign attached the façade just to the west of doorway. The paired mezzanine windows retain their historic single-pane casement windows. A mezzanine story is also introduced at the **main portico, spanning bays 7-9**. The portico is framed by giant Tuscan pilasters and a molded Tuscan entablature. Paired pilasters focus attention on the center entrance bay which was originally recessed. Although the lower portion of the porch has been filled with a non-historic entrance vestibule, the upper 2/3s of the recessed porch remains largely intact. It retains its original paneled stone sidewalls, rear bronze-and-glass screen wall (mezzanine window opening modified by the removal of mullions and substitution of a non-historic single light window), and coffered ceiling. There are mounts for no longer extant historic light fixtures on the face of the pilasters flanking the entrance and pieces of wire left over from non-historic light fixtures on the sidewalls of the porch. **Bays 7 and 9** retain their matching original classically-inspired tripartite bronze-and-glass infill. Both bays have slender colonettes at the ground story that support entablatures, which are decorated with Greek frets and tablets. In **bay 7** the center opening has a pair of original bronze-and-glass doors ornamented with rondels and recessed panels. The doors are flanked by narrow sidelights, which have paneled dados enriched with dentils and bosses. At the first story in **bay 9** the center opening is filled by a large single-light window which rests on a dado that is decorated to match the sidelight dados in bays 7 and 9. Both bays retain their original tripartite mezzanine windows with large center lights and narrow sidelights. (The glass in bay 9 has been painted.) The spandrel panels between the mezzanine and third story windows are embellished with radiating fleurs-de-lis motifs. The third story windows retain their original wide center lights and operable sidelights topped by transoms. The outer pilasters on this portico also retain mounts from historic light fixtures which are no longer extant. A bronze flagpole with a non-historic Con Edison banner is suspended from

brackets above the entablature at the center of the portico. There is a non-historic metal Con Edison sign affixed to the pier between **bay 10 and bay 11**. In **bay 11**, the original doors and surround have been replaced by a non-historic steel-and-glass entry with paired doors side lights and a large transom on which the number “124” has been painted. **Bays 12 through 16** retain their original configuration save for the addition of non-historic awnings with signage for the New York Sports Club.

Upper Stories: Aside from having been painted the upper stories of the 15th Street façade remain remarkably intact. The façade retains its original one-over-one copper-covered calamine windows. Many of the window openings retain their mountings for the building’s original nighttime illumination (See the description of the Irving Place façade for the location of the light sockets). Although the lights have not been used since the 1920s, the mountings are a significant reminder of an early use of nighttime illumination as an element of design.

Penthouse: The nineteenth-story penthouse extends along the entire 15th Street façade. As on Irving Place, it is faced with stucco and originally had square-headed windows, and a tall attic articulated with a panel motif. Most of the window openings on the western and center portions of the nineteenth-story façade have been modified. A corrugated metal shed awning extends above the easternmost windows. A non-historic pipe railing extends the length of the façade about a foot back from the edge of the nineteenth-story roof. Three penthouses — the west penthouse, the center penthouse, and the east penthouse — rise to twenty stories. There are also two half-story enclosures for skylights between the west and center penthouses. Because 15th Street is so narrow and a balustrade edges the roof above the eighteenth story, only the paneled attic of the nineteenth story and the west and center penthouses (these are set closer to edge of roof than the east penthouse which is located near the middle of the roof) are visible from the street near the building. The articulation of the three penthouses is identical that of the Irving Place façade except that they retain their original copper cornices. The west penthouse retains historic three-over-three copper windows. The center penthouse recesses from the street in three steps with the eastern section of the penthouse located closest to the street and visible from the street. The one window opening that is visible from Fifteenth Street retains its historic three-over-three copper sash.

15th Street (east) tower façade: From a distance the upper two stories of the mid-section and campanile are visible above the eighteen-story and penthouse portions of the east side of the building. This façade is articulated to match the primary facades of the tower and retains its original one-over-one copper windows. Two non-historic antennas rest on the cornice of the bell chamber.

East Façade

East Wall: The building’s painted brick eastern wall, facing the parking lot and Third Avenue, angles around the two-story addition at 142 East 15th Street. (The addition is not included in this designation.) This wall has a stepped profile due to the setbacks of the rooftop penthouses. The 84-foot-wide **northern portion of the wall** is part of the 1912-14 Hardenbergh addition. It has four vertical lines of window openings rising from the third story to the eighteenth story with two windows on the sidewall of the nineteenth story penthouse. Except on the seventh story, where non-historic eight-light windows have been installed, the windows on this façade retain their historic three-over-three copper-covered double-hung sash. The southern nineteenth-story window has non-historic infill and a center vent inserted above the upper sash.

The **angled bay** of the 1920s wing has two lines of windows that also retain historic triple-light double-hung copper windows. The southern windows at the fifth and fifteenth stories have been modified by the insertion of non-historic louvers in the upper part of the window. The small

rectangular window on the east wall above the eighteenth-story setback of the angled bay has a non-historic metal louver. The square opening at the nineteenth story contains non-historic two-over-two sash. The wall then makes a right angle connecting the angled bay to the side wall of the portion of the building fronting on to 14th Street. Above the setback of the angled bay this narrow **northern face of the penthouse** has a single line of three windows containing non-historic metal infill and louvers.

At the first story of the **center portion of the east wall** there is a non-historic canopy that is anchored to this wall and the eastern elevation of the two-story addition. The canopy is suspended over a loading dock in the parking lot and the canopy, loading dock, and parking lot are not included in this designation. To the south of the canopy at the base of the wall projecting into the parking lot is a non-historic one-story prefab-booth. It is not included in this designation. To the south of the booth is a non-historic electric junction box. A number of non-historic conduit pipes connect to two non-historic light fixtures and another junction box, which projects from the wall just below the second story. Both junction boxes are not included in this designation. From the second story to the twentieth story this section of the east wall is lit by a single line of windows. The second-, third-, and fourth-story window openings contain non-historic metal louvers. The fifth story has a non-historic tripartite window capped by a non-historic metal louver. The windows on the sixth, seventh, ninth, tenth, twelfth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth stories retain their historic triple-light double-hung copper windows. The eleventh-story window retains its historic tripartite lower sash but non-historic louvers have been inserted in place of the upper sash. Non-historic louvers are employed in the eighth- and thirteenth-story windows. The seventeenth-story opening contains non-historic metal infill with louvers and a large metal vent. The eighteenth story opening contains non-historic infill and a fixed six-light window. The nineteenth story has a non-historic tripartite window capped by a non-historic metal louver. The small square twentieth story opening has non-historic brick infill and a metal louver.

The **southern portion** of the wall nearest 14th Street is pierced by six lines of the windows rising from the fourth to the eighteenth story except for the northernmost line where there are also openings at the second and third stories that now contain non-historic metal louvers. Most of the other windows retain their historic triple-light double-hung copper windows with the exception of the fourteenth-story window in the northernmost bay, which has been enlarged and contains non-historic fill, and the seventeenth-story window in the northernmost bay, which has a non-historic one-over-one aluminum window. The twelfth story window retains its original bottom light but has metal louvers in place of its top sash. Heavy non-historic electrical cables extend from below the seventeenth-story window in **bay 2** (reading south to north) to the roofline. There are large areas of stucco patching along the roofline of this wall, above a number of window lintels and at the corners of the façade where there has been water penetration.

East tower façade: From a distance the upper four stories of the mid-section and campanile are visible above the eighteen story portions of the building. This façade is articulated to match the primary facades of the tower and retains its original one-over-one copper windows. The center line of windows at the mid-section are sealed. A non-historic metal ladder rests on the base of bell chamber cornice and is affixed to the base of the bell shaped roof.

Report researched and written by
Gale Harris
Research Department

NOTES

¹ This information on the early history of the Union Square neighborhood and this building site is based on I.N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1928); Landmarks Preservation Commission [LPC] *Ladies Mile Historic Designation Report* (LP-1609) (New York: City of New York, 1989); LPC *East 17th Street/Irving Place Historic District Designation Report*, prepared by Gale Harris and Jay Shockley, (LP-1976) (New York: City of New York, 1998); Stephen Garmey, *Gramercy Park: An Illustrated History of a New York Neighborhood* (New York: Rutledge Books/Balsam Press, 1984); New York County, Office of the Register, Conveyances Index, block 870; Otto Sackersdorff, *Maps of Farms Commonly Called the Blue Book* (Rpt., New York: E. Robinson, 1887), pl. 4.

² On the Stuyvesant farm see Stokes, v. 6, 99, 142-144; Garmey, 12-21.

³ In the seventeenth century, when the Stuyvesant farm remained far outside the city limits, some parcels were granted to freed slaves to farm. However, these farm lots eventually reverted to the Stuyvesant family. See Garmey, 13-15.

⁴ No. 140 East Fifteenth Street was occupied by the pioneering women physicians Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell from 1854 to 1858. In 1849, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman in the United States to earn an MD degree, graduating from the Geneva Medical College in Western New York. Her sister Emily completed her medical training at Case Western Reserve University in 1854. In 1856 the two sisters and Dr. Marie Zakrzewska opened the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women and Children, the first American hospital for women and staffed entirely by women. For Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell see “Elizabeth Blackwell,” (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927-56) “Emily Blackwell,” <http://www.distinguishedwomen.com/biographies/black-em.html>. For Elizabeth Blackwell’s ownership of the house see New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds & Conveyances, Liber 662, 164; Liber 809, 404.

⁵ “New York City,” *New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1856.

⁶ “The Great Fire,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1866, 8.

⁷ “The Lotos Club,” *New York Times*, Apr. 24, 1870, 5.

⁸ This section on the history of gas lighting in New York City and the Consolidated Gas Company is based on Frederick L. Collins, *Consolidated Gas Company of New York* (New York: Consolidated Gas, 1934); Con Edison, “A Brief History of Con Edison,” http://www.coned.com/history_gas.asp; “Light and Power,” *Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale, 1995), 673-75; “Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc.,” *International Directory of Company Histories* (Detroit: St. James Press, 1992), v. 5, 586-588; “Consolidated Edison, Inc.,” *International Directory of Company Histories* (Farmington Hills, MI: St. James Press: Gale Group, 2002), v. 45, 116-120; “Consolidated Edison – Wikipedia,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consolidated-Edison>; Stokes, v. 6, s.v. “Mar. 17, 1830,” “Feb. 26, 1830,” “Nov. 8, 1833,” “1834,” “May 5, 1848,” “Jun. 30, 1853.”

⁹ The company accepted the new limits in exchange for a more favorable reimbursement rate for the street lighting it had been supplying to the city at a loss. Collins, 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 92.

¹¹ The arc lamp evolved from an 1804 experiment in which Sir Humphrey Davy demonstrated that an electric current bridging a gap between two carbon rods forms an arc, giving off a bright light. Early lamps of this type were made with open arcs; by the late 1870s the lamps were enclosed in glass, making them more practical.

¹² Many of these companies, notably Westinghouse, employed the newly discovered technology of alternating current.

¹³ This section on the earlier portions of the Consolidated Edison Building are based on Consolidated Edison Company, *The Consolidated Gas Company Building, Erected A.D. 1913* (New York: Consolidated Gas Company, 1915); New York City Department of Buildings, New Building permit 712-1910 and New Building permit 636-1912 in Block 870 Lot 24 Folder at the New York City Municipal Archives, Department of Records and Information Services.; “New Building for Gas Company,” *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1910, 17; “Irving Place Duplicating Fourth Avenue in Rapidity of Commercial Development,” *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1911, 21; “Building for the

Consolidated Gas Company of New York,” *Architecture and Building*,” (Jan. 1912), 38-39; “Iron Front Work Consolidated Gas Company’s Building,” *Architecture*, (June 1912); “\$1,5000,000 Gas Company Building,” *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1912, 20; “An Innovation in Construction Methods,” *Record and Guide*, Mar. 14, 1914, 481-482; Charles Warren Hastings, “The Consolidated Gas Company Building,” *Architecture and Building*, (Apr. 1914), 160-162.

¹⁴ Consolidated Gas acquired the house at 123 East 17th in 1902. See Conveyances, Sec. 3, Liber 77, 355.

¹⁵ Van Rensselaer Lansingh and Edward B. Rowe, “Modern Gas Lighting in the Store, Office and Home,” *Transactions of the Illuminating Engineering Society*, 5 (Jan 1910), 19-33.

¹⁶ The building was to house all of the administrative departments of the Consolidated Gas Company, New York Edison Company, Standard Gas Light Company, New Amsterdam Gas Company, United Electric & Power Company, and New Haven Edison Company. It was thought that the company would save enough in rentals to meet the interest on the cost of the new building. See “Consolidated Gas Co.,” *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 6, 1913, 5.

¹⁷ This information comes from architects’ files of the Landmarks Preservation Commission and LPC, *Hotel Martinique Designation Report* (LP-1983), (New York: City of New York, 1998), and “Architects’ Appendix,” *Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District* (LP-1647).

¹⁸ Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and John Massengale, *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzolli, 1983), 262.

¹⁹ “An Innovation in Construction Methods,” 482.

²⁰ For architectural illumination during this period see Dietrich Neumann, *Architecture of the Night: the Illuminated Building* (Munich: Prestel, c. 2002).

²¹ Neumann, 54. For other illuminated power company buildings from this period see Neumann, 98-101; “Illumination of the Electric Building, Portland, Oregon,” *Illuminating Engineer* 5 (Aug. 1910), 296-298.

²² A photograph of the “Consolidated Gas Building as illuminated at night” was published in *King’s Views of New York* (Boston, 1915; rpt New York: Arno Press, 1980), 54.

²³ “Office Space for Rent,” *Real Estate Record*, Apr. 18, 1914, 697.

²⁴ New York City Department of Buildings, Alteration permit 2225-1915; “Plans Filed for Alterations,” *Real Estate Record*, Sept. 25, 1915, 547.

²⁵ “Gas Company Buys Academy of Music,” *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1925, 6.

²⁶ “A Monument to Progress,” *To Serve New York*, 1, no.6 (May 1926), 4.

²⁷ W. Parker Chase, *New York: The Wonder City* (New York: Wonder City Publishing Co., 1932), 199.

²⁸ This section on Warren & Wetmore is adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Steinway Hall Designation Report* (LP-2100), prepared by Jay Shockley (New York: City of New York, 2001), 5-6. For this firm see also Peter Pennoyer and Anne Walker, *The Architecture of Warren & Wetmore* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006).

²⁹ Dennis McFadden, “Warren & Wetmore,” *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* 4 (N.Y. Free Press, 1982), 377.

³⁰ This section on Thomas E. Murray is based on “Thomas Edward Murray,” ed. Dumas Malone *et al.* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964); “T.E. Murray Dies; Famous Inventor,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1929, 18; “Thomas E. Murray,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_E._Murray.; Stephen Birmingham, *Real Lace: America’s Irish Rich* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Thomas Edward Murray, *Power Stations* (New York: T.E. Murray, 1922).

³¹ The brothers quarreled just before Thomas E. Murray, Sr.’s death. J. F. Murray left the family businesses, bought a seat on the stock exchange, went into politics, and was appointed a commissioner of the Port Authority. See “Names J.F. Murray for Port Authority,” *New York Times*, Jan. 4, 1929, 8; “J.F. Murray Put Up For Exchange Post,” *New York Times*, Mar. 30, 1930, 23; “John Murray Dies; Port Commissioner,” *New York Times*, Mar. 28, 1937, 40.

³² “Edison Engineers to Design Buildings,” *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 1928.

³³ T-Square, “The Sky Line: A Glory Regained -New Towers-Glimpse into the Future,” *New Yorker* 4 (Feb. 16, 1929), 70.

³⁴“Editorially Speaking,” *The Architect* 12 (Aug. 1929), 495.

³⁵ However, T-Square, the *New Yorker*’s critic, found the treatment of the cornice of the base which “just misses lining up with corresponding features of the building units” slightly distressing, 70.

³⁶ “Editorially Speaking,” 495.

³⁷ Cited in Stern, *New York 1930*, 509.

³⁸ A detailed description of the original illumination scheme appears in “Tower of Light,” *To Serve New York*, 4, no.9 (Aug. 1929), 2-3. See also “The Mechanism of Our Clock Tower,” *To Serve New York*, 4, no.1 (Dec. 1928), 8.

³⁹ “Editorially Speaking,” 495.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Federal Writers’ Project (NY) *New York City Guide* (New York: Random House, c. 1939), 203.

⁴² Chase, 199.

⁴³“Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc.,” *International Directory of Company Histories* v. 5, 587.

⁴⁴ By March 1936, seventy-five percent of the company’s gross operating revenues came from electricity. The sixteen affiliates that comprised the company maintained sixteen separate sets of books, so there was considerable room for improved communication and integration. See “Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc.,” *International Directory of Company Histories* v. 5, 587; “Annual Report Shows Earnings of \$2.00 on Common Stock,” *To Serve New York*, 11, no.4 (Mar. 1936), 1. “Stockholders Approve Name Change,” *To Serve New York*, 11, no. 5 (Mar. 1936), 5.

⁴⁵ “Light and Power,” *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 674.

⁴⁶ “Consolidated Edison” @ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consolidated_Edison.

⁴⁷ “Changes in Banking Field,” *New York Times*, Aug. 15, 1936, 26; “State Banking Changes,” *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1936, 20.

⁴⁸ “Bomb Damages First National Branch on Irving Pl.,” *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1975, 53.

⁴⁹ Joseph P. Fried, “Refurbish We Must: Consolidated Edison Paints Its Home by Hand,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1966, 349.

⁵⁰ Alt. 943-1954.

⁵¹ Jesse McKinley, “FYI — Holding Back Time,” *New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1996, CY2; Con Edison Media Relations, “Con Edison Tinting Gotham Green with New Nighttime Lighting,” Sept. 10, 2008 @ <http://www.coned.com/newsroom/news/images/NewTowerLights.jpg>.

⁵² Crowns of Light Grace the Skyline,” *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 1981, B1.

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 Consolidated Edison Building has a special character and 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 Con Edison Building, constructed in stages between 1910 and 1929 for the Consolidated Gas Company, predecessor to Consolidated Edison, and designed by the leading architectural firms of Henry Hardenbergh and Warren & Wetmore, is a monumental presence in the Union Square neighborhood and has one of the great towers that define the Manhattan skyline; that the earliest sections of the building, on East 15th Street and the northern end of the block front on Irving Place, built in two phases between 1910 and 1914, were among the last major works of the eminent architect Henry Hardenbergh; that Hardenbergh's eighteen-story, classically-inspired facades feature giant segmental arches and double-story porticos at the base and rusticated limestone piers balanced by strong horizontal moldings at the upper stories and are enlivened by a rich blend of Classical Revival and Renaissance motifs; that Hardenbergh also incorporated an early and historically-significant program of nighttime illumination in his design, which is reflected in the presence of light sockets on the spandrel panels, soffits, upper-story window embrasures, and crowning cornice of the 1910s wing; that between 1926 and 1929 Warren & Wetmore working in association with the engineering firm of Thomas E. Murray built two more additions on Irving Place and East Fourteenth Street, wrapping eighteen-story office wings, which matched the Hardenbergh-designed portions of the building, around a signature twenty-six-story corner tower; that this monumental limestone-clad tower has a three-story colonnaded base and a setback tower featuring illuminated clocks, a bell chamber treated as colonnaded temple modeled on the Hellenistic Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, a bell-capped roof framed by corner obelisks, and a gigantic bronze-and-glass lantern; that characterized by the *New Yorker* as "a sturdy shaft, classic in detail and vigorous in silhouette," the Consolidated Edison tower won critical praise and was among the finest of Warren & Wetmore's late works; that dubbed the "Tower of Light" in corporate literature, the tower was intended to be both a symbol of one of the nation's leading producers of power and light and a memorial to the company's employees who had died in World War I and incorporates numerous devices in its decorative program such as torches and burning urns appropriate for a building associated with lighting and associated with funereal monuments; that these dual purposes were also served by an elaborate program of nighttime illumination, inaugurated in July 1929, and that although the lighting has been updated to reflect modern technology, the tower continues to be illuminated at night and remains in the words of the *New York Times* one of the "crowns of light [that] grace the skyline" and a symbol of Consolidated Edison, Inc.; that Consolidated Edison Inc. is the successor to a long line of power and light companies, beginning with New York Gas Light Company, founded 1823, which have played an integral role in the development of New York City; and that the Consolidated Edison and its predecessors, the Consolidated Gas Company of New York and New York Edison, have continuously been headquartered here since the building's construction.

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 Consolidated Edison Building and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 870, Lot 24 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, excluding the 1915 addition at 142 East 15th Street and the parking lot to the east, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair; Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice-Chair
Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandeis Gratz,
Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



Consolidated Edison Building
4 Irving Place (aka 2-12 Irving Place, 121-147 East 14th Street, 120-140 East 15th Street),
Manhattan

Photo: Christopher D. Braze, 2009



Henry Hardenbergh, Design for the Consolidated Gas Company Building,
now Consolidated Edison Building, 1910
Source: New York Times



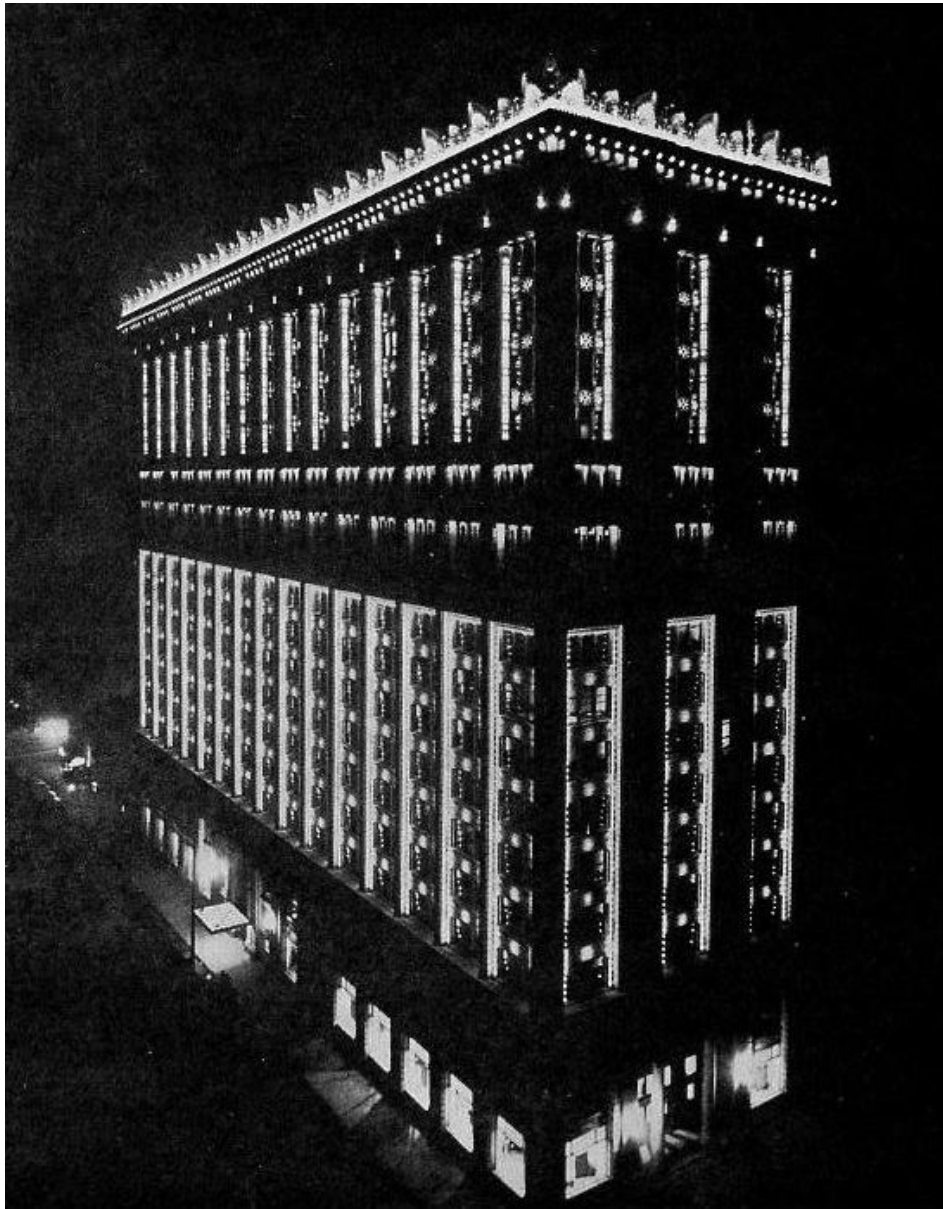
Top: Consolidated Edison Building, formerly Consolidated Gas Company Building
First phase as built, c. 1912

Bottom: Second phase under construction, c. 1913

Photos: Courtesy of Consolidated Edison, Inc.



Consolidated Edison Building, formerly Consolidated Gas Company Building, c. 1914
Photo source: Kings Views of New York, 1915



Consolidated Edison Building, formerly Consolidated Gas Company Building
Illuminated, c. 1914

Photo source: Kings Views of New York, 1915



Consolidated Edison Building, formerly Consolidated Gas Company Building
Details Fifteenth Street façade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



Consolidated Edison Building, formerly Consolidated
Gas Company Building
Details Fifteenth Street façade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2008



Consolidated Edison Building with Warren & Wetmore additions of 1926-29

Left photo: John Barrington Bayley, 1965

Right photo: Wurts Bros., c. 1930, Milstein Division of U.S History, Local History, and Genealogy, NYPL



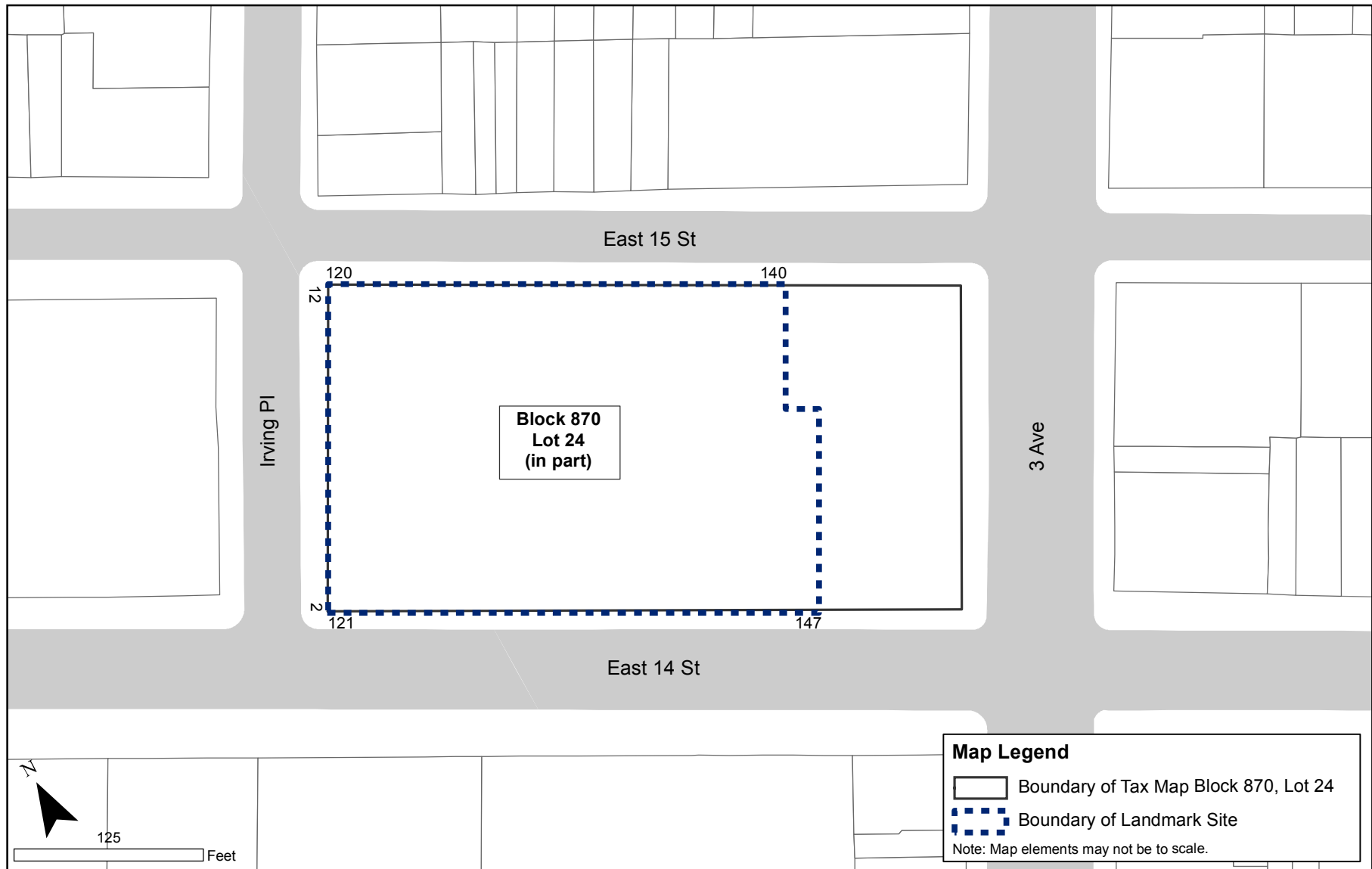
Consolidated Edison Building, tower base
Photos: Christopher D. Braze, 2008-09



Consolidated Edison Building, tower
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2008



Consolidated Edison Building, tower
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2008



CONSOLIDATED EDISON BUILDING (LP-2313), 4 Irving Place (aka 2-12 Irving Place, 121-147 East 14th Street, 120-140 East 15th Street).
 Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 870, Lot 24 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, excluding the
 1915 addition at 142 East 15th Street and the parking lot to the east.

Designated: February 10, 2009