

Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 2, 1990; Designation List 227
LP-1660

HOTEL MARSEILLES, 2689-2693 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1902-05; architect Harry Allan Jacobs.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1874, Lot 52.

On April 19, 1988, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Hotel Marseilles and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 10). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Seven letters have been received in favor of designation. Two letters from two general partners of the New York limited partnership which owns the property and one letter from the contract administrator of the building have been received expressing reservations in regard to the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

Prominently situated at the corner of West 103rd Street and Broadway, the Hotel Marseilles is a distinctive Beaux-Arts style apartment hotel constructed in 1902-05, at a time when this section of Broadway on the Upper West Side experienced rapid development aided by the opening of the Broadway (IRT) subway line, which included a stop at Broadway and West 103rd Street. A distinguished example of the wave of large-scale hotel construction that followed the passage of the Tenement House Law of 1901, the Hotel Marseilles was one of several grand hotels and apartment hotels, such as the Astor Hotel and the Ansonia, built along Broadway north of Times Square during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Hotel Marseilles, clad in brick with limestone, wrought-iron, and terra-cotta trim and crowned with a sloping mansard roof, illustrates the rise of the "modern French" style in commercial and hotel architecture. The appearance of this style in the United States was the result of a sharp increase in the number of American architects attending the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the concomitant ascent of France as the dominant influence in American architecture in the late nineteenth century. Erected for the Netherlands Construction Company and leased after completion to the Marseille [sic] Hotel Company, this apartment hotel was designed by noted architect Harry Allan Jacobs, a specialist in hotels and residential buildings. Largely intact, the Hotel Marseilles serves as a significant reminder of the development of Broadway and the Upper West Side in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The Development of the Upper West Side¹

The Upper West Side was largely undeveloped until the 1880s. Until urbanization at the end of the nineteenth century the area was known as "Bloomingdale," a name derived from the Dutch settlers who called the area Bloemendaal after a flower-growing area in Holland. By the eighteenth

century the Bloomingdale Road (later known as Broadway), following the course of an old Indian trail, provided the main link to lower Manhattan, encouraging the growth of small clusters of villages and the establishment of country estates in the adjoining areas by wealthy New York families. The site on which the Hotel Marseilles stands was once occupied by a wood-frame outbuilding located on the grounds of an estate known first as the Humphrey Jones Homestead and later as the estate of Ann Rogers. The large stone house on the estate, located between the present 101st and 102nd Streets west of the present West End Avenue, was converted to a hotel in 1844 called the Abbey Hotel. In 1857 it was struck by lightning and demolished.

The Upper West Side was included in the Commissioner's map of 1811, which outlined New York's street grid, although the area remained essentially rural and most of the streets were not laid out until after the Civil War. Land speculation, fueled in the post-war years by the creation of Central Park, continued throughout the 1870s despite wild vacillations in prices caused by the Panic of 1873. In addition to Central Park, other amenities made the Bloomingdale section attractive to developers. Plans for Riverside Park and Drive were undertaken in 1876, and completed in 1900. Transportation improvements, such as horse car service on Broadway (begun 1878), the Ninth Avenue Elevated Railroad (completed 1879), and cable traction cars along Amsterdam Avenue (1885) further stimulated speculative interest. From the time that development began in earnest on the Upper West Side, single-family rowhouses were built on the side streets and tenements and flats with commercial ground stories were built on the avenues because the noisy transportation lines made them less desirable for the development of rowhouses.

Broadway was planned as the spine of the Upper West Side. As early as 1868-71 Bloomingdale Road was replaced by a wide avenue designed to receive central grassy malls spanning West 59th to West 155th Streets. The avenue was initially known as "Boulevard" in the area where the Hotel Marseilles now stands, and the "Public Drive" further to the north. In 1898 the avenue was renamed "Broadway." By the late 1890s land prices had reached such extravagant levels that developers could realize little profit from building single-family dwellings, making them too costly for any but the truly rich. By the turn of the century the stage was set for the large-scale development of apartment buildings and apartment hotels on the Upper West Side. The biggest boost to the development of Broadway was the completion in 1904 of the Broadway (IRT) subway line, with stops at 72nd, 79th, 86th, 96th, and 103rd Streets.²

Apartment Hotels³

Apartment buildings, which had been introduced to New York in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, were initially termed "French flats" when they were intended to house the middle and upper-middle classes. All multiple dwellings for three or more tenants were legally classified as tenements, but in common parlance the tenement was often the overcrowded habitat of the working class. Although many early French flats were quite large and sumptuously appointed, Americans of means were initially skeptical of multiple dwellings. The close proximity of neighbors and servants was

thought to hinder privacy and lack decorum. A successful solution to the problem was the apartment hotel.

Apartment hotels were intended to house permanent and transient tenants as well as small families, in suites and single rooms, furnished or unfurnished. All were without kitchen facilities and instead the apartment hotel employed full-service staffs and provided ground floor kitchens and restaurants so that tenants could dispense with personal servants. The first true apartment hotel on the Upper West Side was the original Beresford, constructed on Central Park West in 1889 (later replaced by its towered namesake), and the first wave of apartment hotel building soon followed, lasting from 1889 to 1895. During this period, apartment hotels became so numerous that they sparked a backlash among New York's social establishment; contemporary novelists such as Henry James thought them "vulgar."

A second wave of apartment hotel construction followed the passage of the new Building Code in 1899 and the Tenement House Law of 1901.⁴ Under this law, apartment hotels were classified as hotels rather than tenements. Therefore apartment hotel construction was regulated by the Building Code rather than the more stringent Tenement House Law. As all hotels were considered to be commercial buildings rather than residential, the apartment hotel, compared to the apartment building, could be less fireproof, taller, and cover a larger portion of the lot, thus containing more units. Therefore they allowed a builder a better financial return than an apartment building.⁵

Unlike most apartment buildings, apartment hotels reserved ground floor space for commercial tenants. Thus ground-story storefronts were integral elements of the design of the apartment hotel. Broadway, the grand residential boulevard with compatible commercial uses, was ideally suited for this building type. In anticipation of the increased accessibility and convenience that the IRT would provide to the Upper West Side, many apartment hotels were constructed along Broadway in the early twentieth century.⁶ The Hotel Belleclaire at 2171-2179 Broadway (1901-03, Emery Roth of Stein, Cohen & Roth) and the Ansonia at 2101-2119 Broadway (1899-1904, Graves & Duboy), both designated New York City Landmarks, are particularly notable examples of this trend. Further to the north of the Hotel Marseilles, the Manhasset (1899-1905, Joseph Wolf) at 2801-2821 Broadway was also constructed in anticipation of the IRT. Although it was built as an apartment building, it provided ground floor space for commercial tenants. The construction of these buildings, combined with Broadway's traditional role as the spine of the Upper West Side, contributed to its growth as a grand boulevard of hotels and apartment hotels in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Following World War I, newly-built apartment hotels introduced "bootleg kitchens" -- a true kitchenette -- into their suites, which were intended to warm up food provided by room service. Under the law stoves were still not allowed in living units of apartment hotels, but the law was not always strictly enforced. This situation became a matter of public controversy in the mid-1920s when building inspectors found that some tenants were ignoring

the law. This is one factor that led to a complete overhaul of the old law and to the passage of the Multiple Dwelling Act of 1929, which altered height and bulk restrictions and permitted "skyscraper" apartment buildings for the first time, thus eliminating the economic advantages of developing apartment hotels. This law, combined with rising labor costs and the onset of the Depression effectively marked the end of the apartment hotel; today most have been converted to conventional apartments.

The Beaux-Arts Style and The Hotel Marseilles

The Hotel Marseilles was built by the Netherlands Construction Company (J. Arthur Pinchbeck, president) and leased after completion to the Marseille [sic] Hotel Company. It was one of several Beaux-Arts style hotels and apartment hotels located on Broadway. Its design, characterized by overscaled decorative classical elements and a mansard roof, illustrates the development of the "modern French" style in commercial and hotel design that began in New York in the 1890s.⁷

The use of the "modern French" style in New York City coincided with the rise of France as the dominant influence in American architecture in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This corresponded to a sharp rise in the number of American architects that studied at the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris; over 350 of them were enrolled between 1890 and 1910.⁸ After returning to America, these architects sought to advance the use of Beaux-Arts principles in American architecture, forming groups such as the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects to further this goal. One of the Society's founders, Ernest Flagg (1857-1947), designed a building in 1896 that embodied many of the ideas that he had learned as a student at the Ecole. The original Singer Building (1896-98, demolished) at 149 Broadway (later reconstructed as part of the Singer Tower)⁹ was a ten-story mansarded office building textured with polychromatic red brick and limestone trim and articulated visually by a tripartite scheme of base, midsection, and top. Labeled "modern French," it reflected the "revival of interest in eighteenth-century domestic architecture, especially the French hotel particulier, now adapted to the prestige office building."¹⁰

The "modern French" style, already so prevalent in commercial architecture, became widely used in new hotel construction in the first decade of the twentieth century. One of the most notable was the Astor Hotel on the west side of Broadway between West 44th and 45th Streets (1904-09, Clinton & Russell, demolished). Slightly later than the Hotel Marseilles, it was a fully developed example of the "modern French" style with a brick and limestone facade terminating in an elaborate mansard roof. Further north on Broadway, the Ansonia was perhaps New York City's most sumptuous apartment hotel. The "modern French" style reached a grand expression in this eighteen-story building, clad in stone and crowned with a richly decorated mansard roof. At the same time on the Upper West Side the Manhasset, faced in brick and crowned with a mansard roof, was stylistically similar to the Hotel Marseilles.

Harry Allan Jacobs, architect of the Hotel Marseilles, also promoted the "modern French" aesthetic in his designs. Similar to other contemporary

commercial and hotel designs, the Hotel Marseilles is faced in brick trimmed with limestone and decorative ironwork and crowned with a mansard roof with overscaled terra-cotta dormers. It is an elegant example of the "modern French" style in hotel design illustrating the profound impact of the aesthetic principles taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts on American architecture.

The Architect¹¹

Harry Allan Jacobs (1872-1932) was born and educated in New York City, and began his architectural training at the Columbia School of Mines. After graduating in 1894 he continued his studies in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and was awarded the Prix de Rome by the American Academy in Rome. Following his return to this country, he joined the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects and began his own architectural practice in New York. A notable example of his early work is the Seville Hotel (1901-04) at Madison Avenue and East 29th Street, an exuberant Beaux-Arts structure of brick and limestone similar to the Hotel Marseilles and begun a year earlier.¹²

In addition to hotels, Jacobs's practice focused on the design of elegant residences. An important early example of this period in his career is the Charles Guggenheimer residence at 129 East 73rd Street (1907) in the Upper East Side Historic District. This neo-Italian Renaissance style townhouse, faced in limestone, served as a model for many of his later commissions. Other commissions earned Jacobs wide recognition, including a new facade design for the house of philanthropist R. Fulton Cutting at 22 East 67th Street (1908) and a residence for theater producer Martin Beck at 13 East 67th Street (1921), both in the Upper East Side Historic District. Later in his career Jacobs designed the neo-Italian Renaissance style Andrew Freedman Home (1924-25) at 1125 Grand Concourse in the Bronx, a collaboration with architect Joseph H. Freedlander (1870-1943), a specialist in institutional design. Jacobs returned to hotel design in 1927 with the neo-Renaissance style Hotel Elysee located at 54-60 East 54th Street.

Jacobs's career, spanning the first quarter of the twentieth century, embraced a wide variety of styles, including Beaux-Arts, neo-Federal, and neo-Renaissance. Undoubtedly the high quality of his work and the prominent social standing of some of his clients contributed to the extensiveness of his practice.

Description

This eleven-story Beaux-Arts style apartment hotel is located at the southwest corner of Broadway and West 103rd Street, extending approximately 101 feet along Broadway and 120 feet along West 103rd Street. The building is U-shaped in plan, with a courtyard opening to the south. Faced in stone and brick with wrought-iron and terra-cotta details, the facade is a rich Beaux-Arts composition retaining much of its original appearance.

Faced in coursed and rusticated stone, stories one through three on the Broadway facade are articulated by seven bays each. Stories four through seven are faced in brick laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers. The

first story retains its original openings for storefronts flanked by stone piers and crowned by rectangular spaces designed to hold signage. A projecting dentiled and bracketed cornice caps the first story. The arched bays of the second story are topped by voussoirs and large keystones. The third story has smaller, square-headed window openings; the center bay and the third bay from the southern end are flanked by slit windows. The second bay from each end is flanked by oversized scrolled console brackets supporting a stone cornice above the third story. At the fourth story, these broad bays are framed by stone quoins which rise to the seventh story where they are crowned with scrolled consoles supporting a projecting cornice. The windows in these bays are fronted by wrought-iron balconies. The spandrel panels contain stone panels with foliate ornament and keystones. The remaining window openings have brick lintels and stone sills. The transitional eighth story is faced in stone. The ninth story, faced in brick, continues the pattern of the midsection, and is topped by a terra-cotta cornice interrupted at the second opening from each end to form double-height bays. The tenth story, set into a sloping mansard roof, has dormer windows topped with large and lavish triangular and broken segmentally-arched pediments executed in terra cotta.

The West 103rd Street facade, nine bays wide, continues the same overall design and articulation of detail as the Broadway facade. The stone base of the building decreases in height at the western end to conform to the sloping site. An entrance, located five bays from the eastern end, is topped by a transom faced with original ironwork and is flanked by pairs of large banded and fluted Tuscan columns on pedestals with pilasters behind. These support an entablature featuring garlands, mutules, modillions, and a stone balustrade. Above the entrance is a large cartouche embellished with swags and a mask. The entrance is flanked by an areaway enclosed by wrought-iron railings and stone posts. The large window openings flanking the entrance are arched and contain stone balustrades at the base supporting square-headed windows topped by oculi. The bay above the entrance has a paired window flanked by two slit windows separated by thick mullions; this pattern continues up to the ninth story.

The western elevation, visible above the neighboring building on West 103rd Street, is faced in brown brick with three window openings per story; the smaller center opening has been sealed with red brick. Light-colored brick bandcourses, marking returns of significant features of the West 103rd Street facade, have been obscured by gray paint. A painted sign reading "Marseille," executed in script, is located on the wall.

The Hotel Marseilles survives largely intact. In recent years the two southern bays of the first story of the Broadway facade have been altered for a restaurant; the entrances are surrounded in concrete, painted gray. The windows, tripartite single-pane with transoms and one-over-one double-hung, are aluminum sash. Aluminum spandrel panels have been installed in the double-height bays at the ninth story. A projecting aluminum and glass vestibule has been installed at the main entrance on West 103rd Street. A new metal door (painted gray) has been installed in the areaway of the West 103rd Street facade; other basement openings to the west of the entrance have been sealed with concrete panels. The wrought iron of the areaway

fence has been replaced; the stone balustrade in the window opening to the east of the entrance has been removed. The mansard roof that crowns the building has been resurfaced with asphalt shingles, and in recent years it has been pierced by a row of double-hung windows at the eleventh story. In 1979-80 the Hotel Marseilles was redeveloped as subsidized housing for the elderly, a function which it continues to serve. In 1990 the terra-cotta cornice and wrought-iron railing at the eighth story were removed due to unsafe conditions. At the time of designation a replacement cornice, cast from templates of the old cornice in an alternate material, was planned.

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Report edited by Elisa Urbanelli, Research Department Editor

NOTES

1. This section is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, Hotel Belleclaire Designation Report (LP-1507), report prepared by Nancy Goeschel (New York, 1987), 1,2; and LPC, Riverside-West 105 Street Historic District Designation Report (LP-0323), report edited by Ellen W. Kramer and Alan Burnham (New York, 1973), 2,3.
2. The 103rd Street station was one of fourteen subway stations to open in 1904 under Broadway from West 50th to West 157th Street. See Oscar Israelowitz, New York City Subway Guide (Brooklyn, New York, 1989), 52-60.
3. This section excerpted and modified from Eleanor Edelman, Testimony given before the Landmarks Preservation Commission at a public hearing, Aug. 19, 1988, Item No. 10, (LP-1660), Elizabeth Collins Cromley, Alone Together (Ithaca, New York, 1990), 189-199, and LPC, Hotel Belleclaire, 2.
4. The Hotel Marseilles was constructed during the second wave of apartment hotel building, which lasted from 1903 to 1907. The third wave, driven by the economic prosperity of the 1920s, began in 1924 and ended with the Depression.
5. Joseph D. McGoldrick, et al., Building Regulation in New York City (New York, 1944), 18.
6. I.N. Phelps Stokes, The Iconography of Manhattan Island vol. 3 (New York, 1915-28), 819.
7. The "modern French" style has more recently been called the Beaux-Arts style. Transforming classical architecture to express contemporary taste, the Beaux-Arts style is named for the school where its values were taught, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

8. James Philip Noffsinger, The Influence of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts on the Architects of the United States (Washington, D.C., 1955), 106-09, cited in Mardges Bacon, Ernest Flagg (New York, 1986), 50.
9. The forty-seven story Singer Tower (1906-08) utilized an altered version of the earlier Singer Building as its base. The original Singer Building was increased from ten stories to fourteen; at the same time, its mansard roof and brick walls were partially removed to accommodate the tower addition. After the two structures were linked internally, the original building became a fourteen-story block that encased the tower, promoting the tower's stability and reducing wind pressure. The Singer Tower (and its base) were demolished in 1970. See Bacon, 211-215.
10. "The New Singer Building," New York Times, Jan. 10, 1897, p.7, cited in Bacon, 212.
11. Jacobs's biography is based on Harry Allan Jacobs obituary, New York Times, Aug. 22, 1932, p. 15; and LPC Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report Vol. 2 (LP-1051), report edited by Marjorie Pearson (New York, 1981), 1268-69.
12. "An Apartment Hotel, Madison Avenue and 29th Street," Architectural Record 12, (June, 1902), 236.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Hotel Marseilles has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Hotel Marseilles is a distinctive Beaux-Arts style apartment building constructed in 1902-05, at a time when this section of Broadway on the Upper West Side experienced rapid development aided by the opening of the Broadway (IRT) subway line; that it was one of several grand hotels and apartment hotels built along Broadway north of Times Square in the first decade of the twentieth century; that, clad in brick with limestone, wrought-iron, and terra-cotta trim and crowned with a sloping mansard roof, it is a distinguished example of the "modern French" style in hotel architecture, a style which appeared in the United States as the result of a sharp increase in the number of American architects attending the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris; that it was designed by noted architect Harry Allan Jacobs, a specialist in hotel and residential buildings; and that, largely intact, it serves as a significant reminder of the development of Broadway as a grand boulevard in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21) 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 Hotel Marseilles, 2689-2693 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1874, Lot 52, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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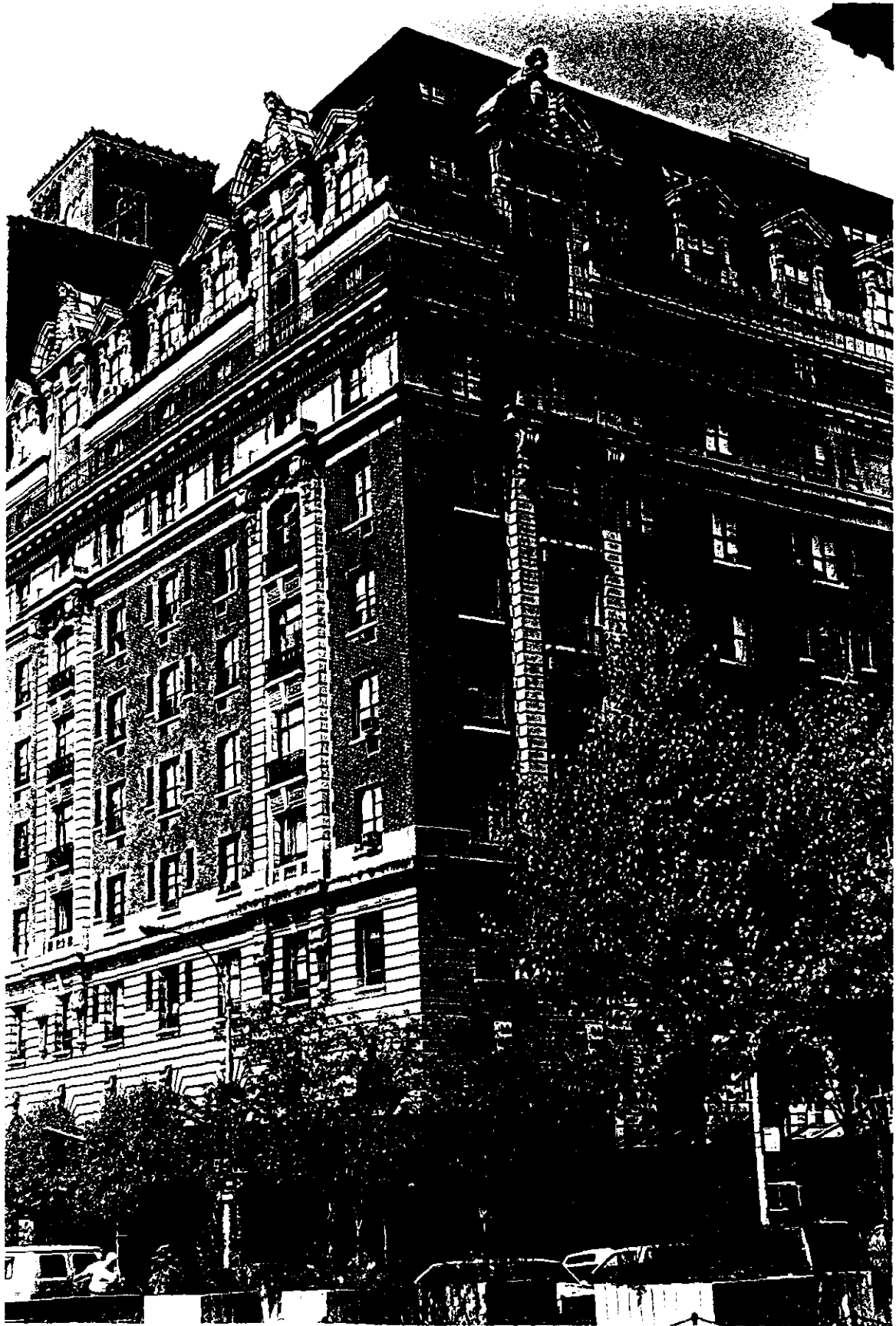
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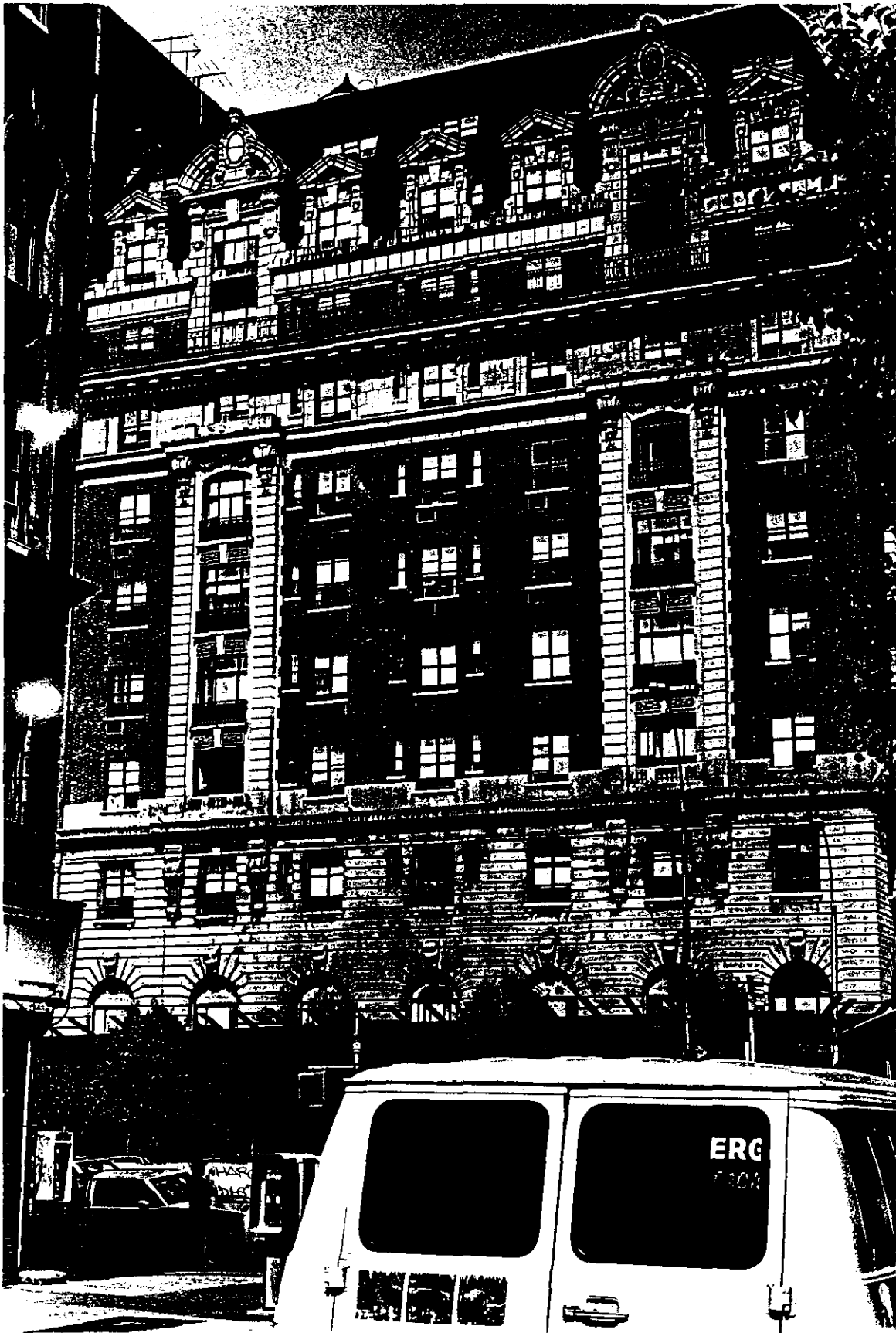
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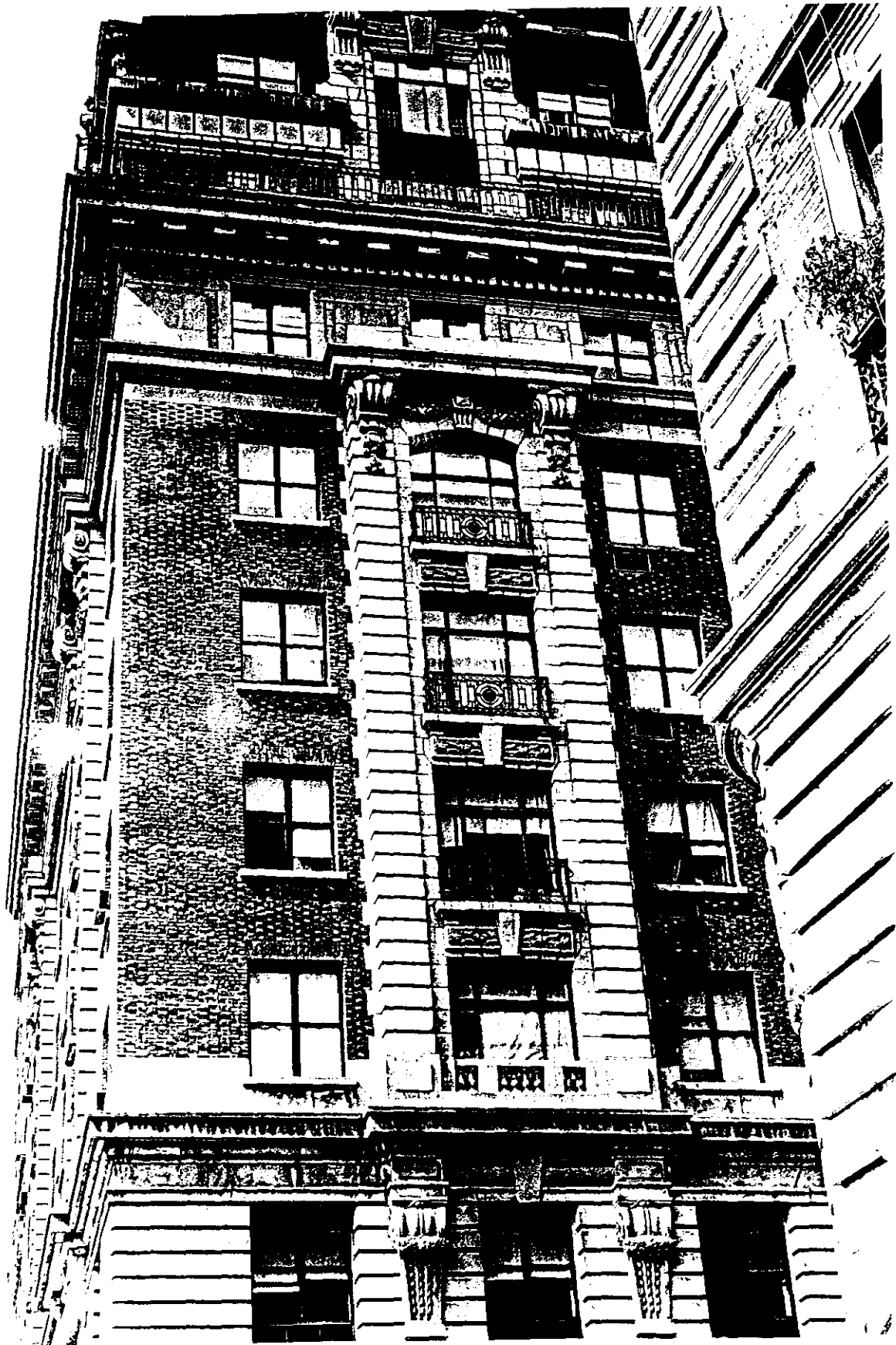
Hotel Marseilles, 2689-2693 Broadway, 1902-05
Architect: Harry Allan Jacobs

Photo credit: Kevin McHugh



Hotel Marseilles
Broadway Facade

Photo credit: Kevin McHugh



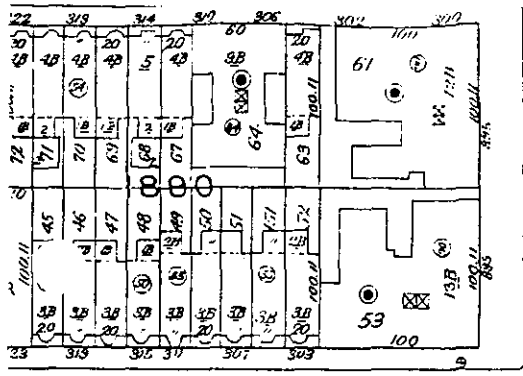
Hotel Marseilles
Detail, West 103rd Street Facade

Photo credit: Kevin McHugh

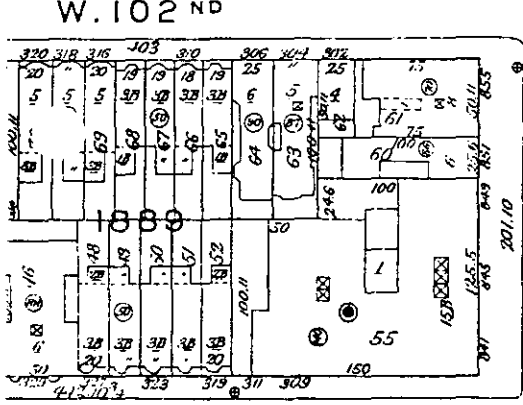
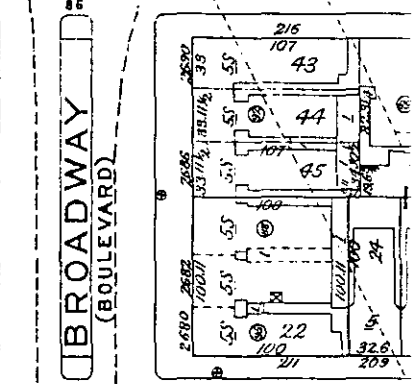
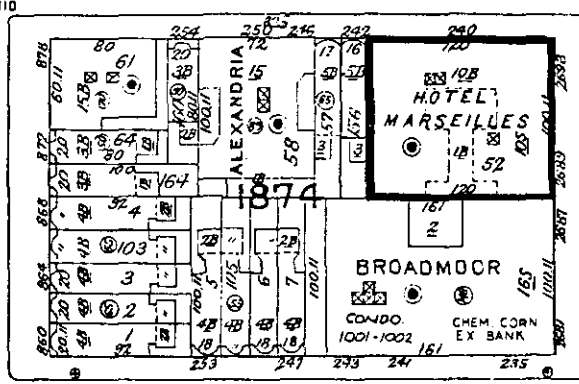
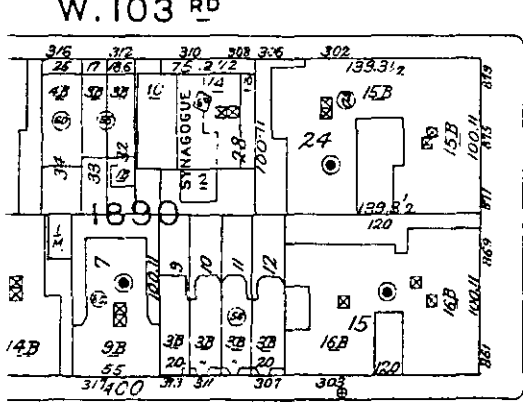
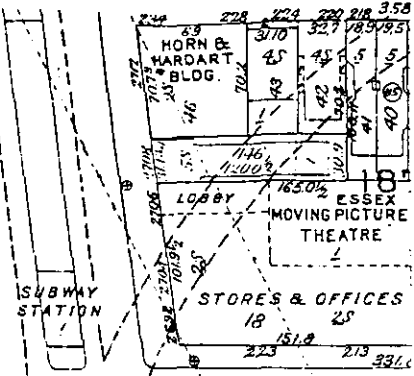
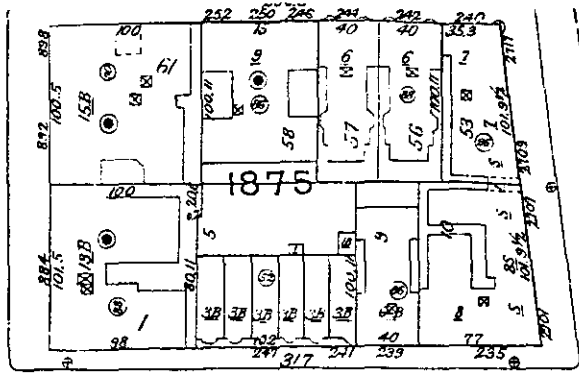


Hotel Marseilles
Western Elevation

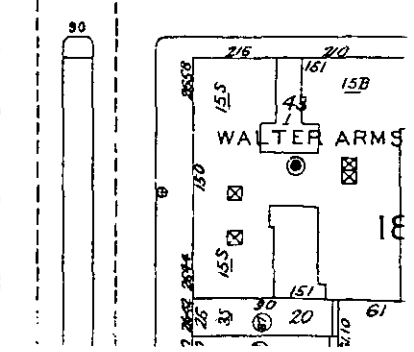
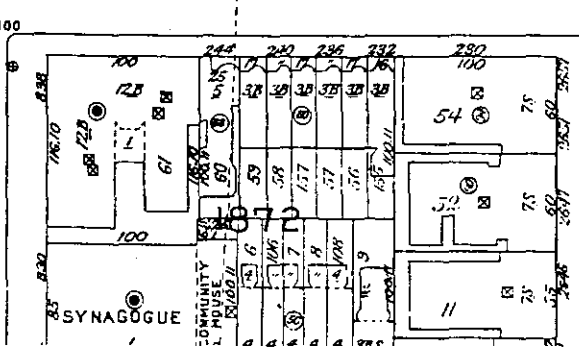
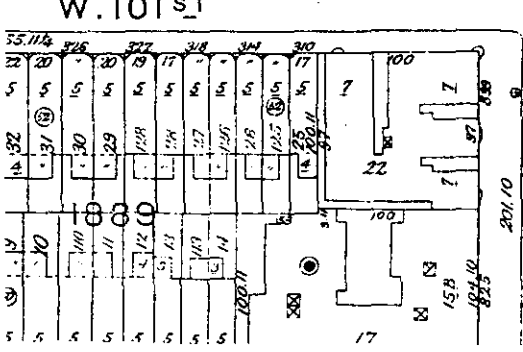
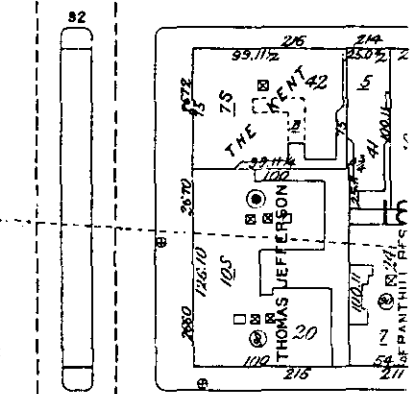
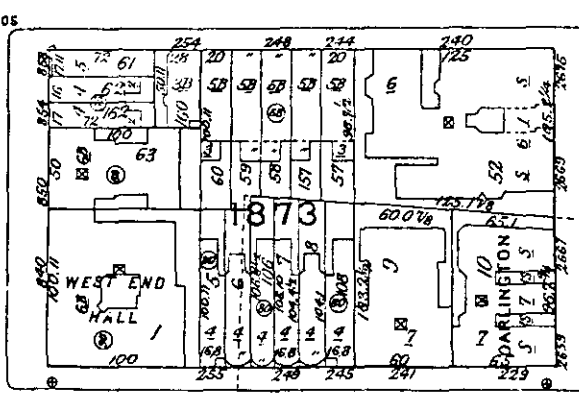
Photo credit: Kevin McHugh



AVE.



WEST END



Hotel Marseilles Landmark Site, Manhattan
Block 1874, Lot 52

Graphic Source: Sanborn Manhattan Land Book, 1989-90 Edition