

GORHAM BUILDING, 889-891 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1883-84; architect, Edward Hale Kendall. Alterations 1893; Edward H. Kendall.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 848, Lot 12.

On November 18, 1980, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a Public Hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Gorham Building, 889-891 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 13). The hearing was continued to February 10, 1981 (Item No. 6). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were ~~no speakers in opposition to designation. Two letters were read in favor of~~ designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Gorham Building, built in 1883-83 at the northwest corner of Broadway and 19th Street, was designed by noted architect Edward Hale Kendall, and is one of his few surviving buildings. The building is an unusual example remaining in New York of the Queen Anne style. This style, which was not often used for commercial buildings, makes the building with its picturesque massing and rich ornamental detail a noteworthy addition to the area. Erected for Robert and Ogden Goelet when this section of Broadway was a fashionable shopping district, the building housed the store of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, a producer of fine silver, in its lower two floors.

The Clients and the Site

Robert (1841-1899) and Ogden (1851-1897) Goelet were members of an old and wealthy New York family; the first Goelet came to New Amsterdam from Holland in the third quarter of the 17th century.¹ Robert and Ogden's great-grandfather was a successful hardware dealer. Their grandfather, Peter P. Goelet, continuing the hardware business, also invested in New York real estate; by the time of his death in 1830 he owned a large property known as the "Goelet Farm." Their father Robert, and especially their uncle Peter, greatly increased the family land holdings in the city. According to his 1879 obituary in the New York Times, Peter Goelet "made it an invariable rule never to part with a foot of land the title of which had been once vested in the Goelet family.... On the other hand, he was at all times ready to purchase property," so that by the end of his life he "owned lots in every part of the city."² Robert and Ogden Goelet, inheriting the property in 1879, continued their uncle's practice of rarely or never selling land, and the estate constantly increased in value.³

The Goelets began to acquire land on both sides of Broadway between 19th and 20th Streets in the 1840s, by which time the built-up city had reached Union Square and was rapidly growing northward. The first Goelet to buy land in the area was Peter Goelet, the uncle of Robert and Ogden. In January 1844

he purchased two lots at Broadway and 20th Street (on the site of the present Goelet Building, McKim, Mead and White, 1886-87), and a large parcel at the northeast corner of Broadway and 19th Street, where about a year later he built his own house. By the 1880s almost all the land along Broadway between 19th and 20th Streets belonged to the Goelets. The actual site of the Gorham Building was purchased by another member of the family, Almy Goelet, in 1845-46.

Broadway above 14th Street never became as fashionable a residential district as it had been further south. Although there were some mansions, other dwellings tended to be flats for middle-class residents with shops on the ground floor. Peter Goelet's four-story brownstone mansion at Broadway and 19th remained the grandest residence on Broadway⁴ until its demolition in 1897.⁵ By the 1870s, Broadway between 14th and 23rd Streets was being redeveloped as part of a fashionable shopping district which included Broadway and Fifth and Sixth Avenues, and 14th and 23rd Streets. Broadway between 10th Street and Madison Square became known as the "Ladies' Mile."⁶ Tiffany built a cast-iron fronted building at Union Square and 15th Street; Lord & Taylor's new store, also iron-fronted (and a designated New York City Landmark) opened at the southwest corner of Broadway and 20th Street; Arnold Constable and Co. built their store at the southwest corner of Broadway and 19th. The panic of 1873 considerably reduced construction in New York, but building resumed in the late 1870s. In the early 1880s W. & J. Sloane's store opened at the southeast corner of Broadway and 19th Street, across from Arnold Constable, and Brooks Brothers was located at Broadway between 21st and 22nd Streets. It was during this period that the Gorham Building was erected.

Although the area was at its commercial height in the 1870s and 1880s, it remained fashionable for shopping until the early 20th century, when the large businesses started moving further north. The first to leave was B. Altman's in 1906, moving from Sixth Avenue and 18th Street to Fifth Avenue at 34th Street, its present location. The Gorham Company followed the same year, moving to a new building on Fifth Avenue at 36th Street. By the end of World War I, most of the major stores had departed from the Ladies' Mile district, leaving their buildings behind.

The Architect

To design the Gorham Building, Robert and Ogden Goelet commissioned Edward Hale Kendall (1842-1901), who in 1880 had been the architect for their new houses on Fifth Avenue. Kendall, born in Boston, attended the Boston Latin School and then lived in Paris in 1858-59, studying languages, art, and architecture. On his return to Boston, he entered the office of Bryant & Gilman, where he worked and studied architecture. In 1865 he moved to New York, where he remained until his death.

Both Bryant and Gilman had been important architects in their day. G.J.F. Bryant (1816-1899), brother of the poet William Culet Bryant, was a prominent architect in Boston and New England in the second half of the 19th century. He designed numerous public buildings, churches and commercial buildings, including the station of the Old Colony Railroad (1847), the Charles Street Jail (1848-1851), the State Street Block (1857), the Beebe Block (1861), the Boston City

Hospital (1861-64), and the Boston City Hall (1862-1865), which was planned during Bryant's partnership with Gilman and is attributed to the latter. Arthur D. Gilman (1821-1881) worked first in Boston and then in New York. His article in the North American Review of April 1844, "Architecture in the United States," is an important document in the historiography of American architecture. In it, Gilman criticized the Greek Revival, popular at the time, as well as the work of Charles Bulfinch. He praised the Gothic, and to a lesser degree the architecture of pre-Revolutionary Boston, but above all favored the Italian Renaissance, thus presaging the popularity of the emerging Italianate styles in America.⁷ He was also interested in the design theories current in academic circles in Second Empire France.⁸ Gilman worked with Bryant from 1859 until 1866, when he moved to New York. His major commissions in Boston included the Arlington Street Church (1851-61) and the Boston City Hall (1862-65, with Bryant). This last work was especially influential in introducing the Second Empire style to American public buildings of the period.

After moving to New York, Kendall worked with Gilman on two projects. In 1867, they collaborated on a design for the New York State Capitol, which was not accepted; Gilman then worked on this project with another architect. In 1868 Gilman and Kendall formed a short-lived partnership and designed one major building, the Equitable Life Assurance Company Building (1868-70) at 120 Broadway (demolished); George B. Post served as engineer. The Equitable was the first office building in New York to have a passenger elevator. At 130 feet, it was twice as high as the average buildings surrounding it⁹ and was in the French Second Empire style with a mansard roof.

After 1870 Kendall worked independently. His work, little of which survives, is characteristic of contemporary architectural trends, displaying styles which were prevalent during the last third of the 19th century. Besides the Gorham, his major commissions included the neo-Grec German-Savings Bank (with Henry Fernbach, 1870; demolished) at Fourth Avenue and 14th Street; the Queen Anne style Field or Washington Building (1882; demolished) at 1 Broadway, described in 1894 as "one of our most prominent buildings";¹⁰ the Renaissance Revival Methodist Book Concern (1888; extant) at 150 Fifth Avenue; and the neo-Grec houses for Robert and Ogden Goelet (1880; demolished) on Fifth Avenue at 48th and 49th Streets. His neo-Grec warehouse for F. Oelbermann & Co. (1876-77, extant) at 57-63 Greene Street was joined by a neo-Renaissance annex (1898-99; extant) at 64-68 Wooster Street. Kendall was the consulting architect for the Washington Bridge over the Harlem River from West 181st Street in Manhattan to University Avenue in the Bronx.¹¹ He also was consulting architect to the Department of Docks, and in this capacity designed and directed the building of five recreation piers on the East River. He also designed stores, warehouses, French flats, houses, and stations for the West Side "E1."

Besides maintaining an active practice, Kendall was deeply involved in the work of the American Institute of Architects. He served as president of the New York Chapter from 1884 to 1888 and as president of the national organization in 1892 and 1893.

The Gorham Manufacturing Company

The Goelet's building was originally constructed for mixed use, with the two lower floors rented by the Gorham Manufacturing Company for its new store. The building soon became known as the Gorham Building after its major tenant.

The founder of this business, jeweler and silversmith Jabez Gorham (1792-1869) lived and worked in Providence, R.I.¹² After finishing his apprenticeship in Providence, he made and sold gold jewelry, first in a partnership with four other men, then independently. Twice a year he visited New York and Boston to sell his products, among which was the popular "Gorham chain." In 1831 Gorham decided to become a silversmith, and formed a partnership with H.I. Webster. The new firm of Gorham and Webster produced silver spoons, forks, thimbles, and the like. In 1837 W.G. Price joined the partnership. In 1841 Jabez's son John became a partner, and the firm became Jabez Gorham & Son.

Jabez Gorham retired in 1847. When he had begun manufacturing silverware in 1831, the work was largely done by hand; by the time of his retirement, the firm had already turned to machinery, the first silversmiths to do so.¹³ In 1865, after various changes in the business, the Gorham Manufacturing Company was incorporated in Rhode Island, with Jabez Gorham's son John as its first president. When the New York store opened in May 1884, the New York Times characterized the company as "the most extensive silverware house in this country."¹⁴ King's Handbook of New York, in 1892, called the company "the finest in its line in the world."¹⁵ The Gorham Company manufactured an endless variety of silver objects, "silver fashioned for every conceivable use,"¹⁶ according to King's Handbook, including ecclesiastical metalwork. The company remains in business today under the name of the Gorham Company.

The Gorham Building and the Queen Anne Style

The Gorham Building is an eight-story structure located at the northwest corner of Broadway and 19th Street.¹⁷ Construction of the building began in June 1883 and was finished in June 1884. Designed for mixed use, the Gorham originally contained bachelor apartments or flats above the second story. Such mixed-use buildings were often constructed on avenues and commercial streets. This section of Broadway was taken over for commerce so quickly, however, that no residential uses survived for long. Of four buildings begun on this section of Broadway in the first half of 1883, only the Gorham included residential floors.¹⁸

In 1888 the Gorham Company expanded into the third and fourth floors of the building. Partitions on those floors were removed; the third floor was turned into an engraving room for silver-plated ware, and the fourth into a salesroom. In 1893 all remaining residential use was terminated. External and internal alteration in that year were carried out by Kendall.

Kendall designed the Gorham Building in the Queen Anne style, popular in this country in the late 1870s and early 1880s. The style came to the United States from England, where it had begun to develop in the late 1860s. Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) was the most influential English architect working in the style. His designs began being published in this country during the mid-1870s in several architectural periodicals, notably the American Architect and

Building News. Americans first saw the Queen Anne style at the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia, where two houses were built by the British.¹⁹

Actually based on domestic Elizabethan architecture, the Queen Anne combined elements of Dutch architecture with those of Renaissance and English Gothic, and, in the United States, with elements of Colonial architecture. The style developed in two versions. The more widespread appeared in wooden houses built in the country and in small towns. Less common were brick and stone buildings, both domestic and commercial, for urban settings. Typical features of the Queen Anne style were stepped or scrolled gables, steeply pitched roofs, turrets, decorative brick, terra-cotta and stone bands, and cut and molded brick.

The Queen Anne style is rare in New York today, and particularly so among commercial or public buildings. The Gorham Building, even in its somewhat altered state, is a distinguished design and one of the few commercial buildings in the style to survive.

Description

The eight-story Gorham Building is constructed of pink brick with brick and light gray Belleville sandstone trim. Its high pitched slate roof with green copper elements adds to its picturesqueness. The building has three bays on the Broadway side and seven on 19th Street. The two lower stories act as a base and were designed to incorporate commercial uses. The bays here are divided by two-story brick piers with foliate stone ornament. The tripartite windows at the second floor are set in arched enframements within rectangular openings, with the exception of that in the middle bay on Broadway (where originally there was a gable over the Gorham store entrance). The windows of the base and also in part the upper story windows are trimmed with scrolled and swagged pressed metal ornament. Above the second story, separating the base from the upper stories, run two stone stringcourses, with brick panels between them aligned with the windows.

At the corner, above the second floor, a tower originally rose to a cupola at the top with small round windows at the third, fourth and fifth stories. The tower was later removed (although its corbeled base remains), the cupola replaced by a dormer, the corner was chamfered, and new window openings were cut all the way up to the top. Apart from the tower, the major external alteration in the upper stories was the enlargement of windows in the center and end bays, occasioned by the adaptation of the building to its new commercial use. The architect, however, carried out the alterations in such a way that, although he penetrated the stone and brick bands separating the floors, he did not destroy the original design. New pressed metal spandrels were produced in the style of the original stone ornament.

The three Broadway bays are practically identical, although the middle bay is slightly narrower than the others; each is topped by a dormer. The original stone bands remain on the piers flanking the windows.

The windows in the bays of the 19th Street front are arranged in two patterns. The first, fourth and seventh bays are identical and topped by dormers. The second and third, and the fifth and sixth bays are grouped in pairs and surmounted by stepped gables. In these bays the original brick and stone bands defining the floors remain intact. All the windows in the third through seventh stories contain paired one-over-one double-hung sash, except at the chamfered corner where they contain single double-hung sash.

The ornament of the building, its most characteristic Queen Anne feature, becomes more elaborate approaching the top. A stringcourse runs above the fifth story. Underneath the stringcourse are decorated segmental arches in the first and third bays of the Broadway front and in the first, fourth, and seventh bays of the 19th Street front. Flanking these arches and continuing in panels on 19th Street are sunflowers and other floral motifs, a hallmark of the Queen Anne style. The windows of the sixth floor in the same bays are flanked by scroll motifs of brick outlined with stone. The seventh floor windows are enframed by slender projecting piers.

The building is topped by a high, pitched slate roof with copper trim. Stepped gables, dormers and, between them, small windows with copper hoods project from the roof. The dormers were somewhat altered in the original conversion, so that window openings could be inserted, since the eighth floor is located inside the roof. Copper cresting surmounts the roof. A modern elevator penthouse is visible on the Broadway side.

Conclusion

The Gorham Building survives today as a rare example of the Queen Anne style in New York City, and is an important link in the series of buildings that made up the "Ladies' Mile" of the 1880s and 1890s. The alterations made to the structure were carried out by its original architect, in the same basic style, and did not damage the building's design in any significant way. Although primarily associated with the Gorham Company's silver store, the building is unusual for its early combination of commercial and residential use. The Gorham Building today, after many decades as a strictly commercial structure, has returned to residential use as city development patterns have shifted. The Gorham Building with its handsome Queen Anne style facades remains one of the most unusual architectural presences in the area.

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FOOTNOTES

1. "Goelet, Robert Walton," National Cyclopedia of American Biography (New York: James T. White & White, 1949). vol. 35, p. 417; The Voyages and Travels of Francis Goelet (1746-1758), ed. by Kenneth Scott (New York: Queens College Press/Gregg Press, 1970), p.1.
2. New York Times, November 22, 1879, p.1.
3. New York Times, August 28, 1897, p.7.
4. Charles Lockwood, Manhattan Moves Uptown (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), p.178.
5. Stephen Jenkins, The Greatest Street in the World (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), p.223.
6. Lockwood, p.296.
7. "Gilman, Arthur Delevan," Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), vol. 7, p.298.
8. "Gilman, Arthur Delevan," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects (New York: The Free Press, 1982), vol. 2, p.208.
9. Winston Weisman, "A New View of Skyscraper History," The Rise of an American Architecture, ed. by Edgar Kaufman, Jr. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p.125.
10. Architecture and Building, 21 (1894), 182. It was called the Washington Building because on the site was a mansion in which Washington had his headquarters at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Later the mansion was converted into a hotel under the name of the Washington Hotel. It was purchased by C.W. Field in 1881 (Lockwood, pp.34, 273; History of Real Estate, p.115).
11. The bridge is a designated New York City Landmark.
12. "Gorham, Jabez," National Cyclopedia of American Biography (New York: James T. White & Company, 1933), vol. 23, pp. 303-304.
13. "Gorham, Jabez," Who Was Who in America 1607-1896 (Chicago, Ill.: The A.N. Marquis Company, 1963), p.211.
14. New York Times, May 28, 1884, p.8.
15. King's Handbook of New York (Boston: Moses King, 1893), p.846.
16. Ibid.
17. The lot measures 55 feet on Broadway, 52 feet on the west, 109½ feet on 19th Street and 92 feet on the north.

18. The Real Estate Record and Guide, August 4, 1883, p.568
19. Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, American Architecture 1607-1976 (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1981), p.294.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

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 Gorham Building 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 Gorham Building is a rare surviving example of the Queen Anne style in New York; that it was designed by Edward H. Kendall, a noted New York architect, with early alterations carried out by the same architect in the original style; that it was home to the Gorham Silver Company, one of New York's most famous commercial establishments; that it was originally designed to contain both the Gorham Company and apartments and is therefore an early example of a mixed-use building in New York; that as the Gorham Company's store it was an important link in the chain of first-class stores and department stores that comprise the Broadway "Ladies' Mile" in the late 19th century; and that the Gorham Building with its handsome Queen Anne style facades remains one of the most unusual architectural presences in the area.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Gorham Building, 889-891 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 848, Lot 12, Borough of Manhattan as its Landmark Site.

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Commission

GORHAM BUILDING
889-891 Broadway
· Built 1883-84

Architect:
Edward Hale Kendall