

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
RIVERSIDE

Saving Carnegie Hall: A Case Study of Historic Preservation in Postwar New York

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

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June 2015

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The Thesis of Sandra Elizabeth Schmitz is approved:

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Patricia Morton, for helping me to arrive at this topic and for providing encouragement and support along the way. I'm incredibly grateful for the time she took to share her knowledgeable insight and provide thorough feedback. Committee members Dr. Jason Weems and Dr. Catherine Gudis also brought valuable depth to my project through their knowledge of American architecture, urbanism, and preservation.

The department of Art History at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) made this project possible by providing me with a travel grant to conduct research in New York City. Carnegie Hall's archivists graciously guided my research at the beginning of this project and provided more information than I could fit in this thesis.

I could not have accomplished this project without the support of Stacie, Hannah, Leah, and all the friends who helped me stay grounded through the last two years of writing, editing, and talking about architecture. Many thanks to my cohort who have made this time at UCR a memorable and enjoyable experience.

## **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Carnegie Hall’s Early History and Postwar Architectural Context .....	6
Chapter 2: The Pivotal Preservation of Carnegie Hall.....	46
Chapter 3: A Study in Opposing Preservation Outcomes.....	101
Conclusion .....	136
Bibliography .....	146

## List of Figures

Figure 1 .....	12
Carnegie Hall (Music Hall founded by Andrew Carnegie), New York, NY, 1891. (From the Carnegie Hall Archives)	
Figure 2 .....	14
Carnegie Hall (Music Hall founded by Andrew Carnegie), New York, NY, 1908. (From Science, Industry and Business Library: General Collection, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections. <a href="http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-0fef-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99">http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-0fef-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99</a> )	
Figure 3 .....	16
Illustration of Carnegie Hall additions with dates, 1981. (From “United States Department of the Interior National Park Service Architectural Data Form.” Department of the Interior, 1981.)	
Figure 4 .....	17
Carnegie Hall, mansard roof replaced with skylights and rear building added, New York, NY, 1895. (From the Collections of the Museum of the City of New York)	
Figure 5 .....	18
Carnegie Hall, additional stories added to “Lateral Building”, New York, NY, 1905. (From the Collections of the Museum of the City of New York)	
Figure 6 .....	21
Carnegie Hall, exterior, New York, NY, 1960. (From the Carnegie Hall Archives)	
Figure 7 .....	27
Fraunces Tavern prior to speculative reconstruction, between 1900 and 1906. (From the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/det/item/det1994009132/PP/">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/det/item/det1994009132/PP/</a> )	

Figure 8 .....	28
<p>Morris-Jumel Mansion, Edgecomb Avenue &amp; 160<sup>th</sup>-162<sup>nd</sup> Streets, New York, NY, 1936. Arnold Moses, photographer. (From The Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Prints &amp; Photographs Division, NY,31-NEYO,51-1. <a href="http://loc.gov/pictures/item/ny0403/">http://loc.gov/pictures/item/ny0403/</a>)</p>	
Figure 9 .....	30
<p>Edgar Allan Poe Cottage in Bronx, NY, prior to its move, ca. 1910. (From the Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collect, Library of Congress, Prints &amp; Photographs Division. <a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/det.4a24594">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/det.4a24594</a>)</p>	
Figure 10 .....	31
<p>Birthplace of Theodore Roosevelt, New York, NY, 1923. (From the Library of Congress, Prints &amp; Photographs Division. <a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.36132">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.36132</a>)</p>	
Figure 11 .....	36
<p>Proposed location of Lincoln Square Renewal Project, 1956. (Excerpt from Richard C. Guthridge, “Lincoln Square, slum clearance plan under title 1 of the housing act of 1949 as amended,” <i>100 Years: The Rockefeller Foundation</i>. <a href="http://rockefeller100.org/items/show/5738">http://rockefeller100.org/items/show/5738</a>.)</p>	
Figure 12 .....	38
<p>Lincoln Center Model, 1957. (From New York City Parks Photo Archive)</p>	
Figure 13 .....	50
<p>United Nations Headquarters, New York, NY, 1966. George Eisenman, photographer. (From The Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Prints &amp; Photographs Division, NY-6076-2. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ny0948/">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ny0948/</a>)</p>	
Figure 14 .....	51
<p>Proposed extension of Fifth Avenue through Washington Square Park. (From <i>New York Times</i>, March 11, 1955)</p>	

Figure 15.....	52
<p>Robert Moses with model of proposed Brooklyn-Battery Bridge, 1939. C.M. Spiegilitz, photographer. (From New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. <a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2006675178/">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2006675178/</a>)</p>	
Figure 16.....	54
<p>Aerial view of New York City looking south on Manhattan, 1945. (From the New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. <a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print</a>)</p>	
Figure 17.....	57
<p>Empire Theatre, New York, NY, date unknown. (From the Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections. <a href="http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-0657-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99">http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-0657-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99</a>)</p>	
Figure 18.....	60
<p>James B. Duke townhouse, 1 East 78th Street, Manhattan, 1935. Bernice Abbott, photographer. (From The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections. <a href="http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-4f4f-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99">http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-4f4f-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99</a>)</p>	
Figure 19.....	61
<p>International Center of Photography (originally the Willard and Dorothy Whitney Straight house), 1130 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, ca. 1979. (From the Collections of the Museum of the City of New York)</p>	
Figure 20.....	64
<p>Newspaper clipping showing fundraising drive for Carnegie Hall, 1955. (From Joseph Taubman Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives)</p>	

Figure 21 .....	65
Ad for Jack Benny Benefit Concert for Carnegie Hall, 1956. (From Joseph Taubman Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives)	
Figure 22 .....	73
Model of proposed design for Lincoln Center, 1961. (From the Collection of the Museum of the City of New York)	
Figure 23 .....	76
Philharmonic Hall (now Avery Fisher Hall), front elevation, Lincoln Center, New York, NY, 1965. (From the Collections of the Museum of the City of New York)	
Figure 24 .....	80
Proposed skyscraper replacement for Carnegie Hall, 1957. Pomerance and Breines, architects. (From <i>Life</i> , September 9, 1957)	
Figure 25 .....	96
Jefferson Market Courthouse (previously Third Judicial District Courthouse), view from southeast, New York, NY, 1960. Cervin Robinson, photographer. (From The Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS NY,31-NEYO,65--1, <a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/hhh.ny0431/photos.119824p">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/hhh.ny0431/photos.119824p</a> )	
Figure 26 .....	98
Grand Central Terminal, New York, NY, 1943. Ed Nowak, photographer. (From University of North Texas Libraries, crediting Museum of the American Railroad, Dallas, Texas. The Portal to Texas History, <a href="http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph28618">http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph28618</a> )	
Figure 27 .....	99
Interior of Grand Central Station, New York, NY, 1960. (From University of North Texas Libraries, crediting Museum of the American Railroad, Dallas, Texas. The Portal to Texas History, <a href="http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph28608/">http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph28608/</a> )	

Figure 28.....	107
<p>Bird's-eye view of Pennsylvania Station, New York, NY, ca. 1910. (From the Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collect, Library of Congress, Prints &amp; Photographs Division. <a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/det.4a24329">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/det.4a24329</a>)</p>	
Figure 29.....	108
<p>Interior of Pennsylvania Station, New York, NY, 1945. (From University of North Texas Libraries, crediting Museum of the American Railroad, Dallas, Texas. The Portal to Texas History, <a href="http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph28755/">http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph28755/</a>)</p>	
Figure 30.....	109
<p>Main waiting room, Pennsylvania Station, ca. 1911. (From the Library of Congress, Prints &amp; Photographs Division. <a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b16128">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b16128</a>)</p>	
Figure 31.....	112
<p>Rendering of proposed Madison Square Garden Complex, 1962. (From "Penn Station to Give Way to Madison Square Garden; Great Space in Peril; RR to Go Underground," <i>Progressive Architecture</i> 42 (September 1961): 65.)</p>	
Figure 32.....	112
<p>Section view of Proposed Madison Square Garden Complex, 1963. (From <i>New York Times</i>, October 29, 1963)</p>	
Figure 33.....	118
<p>Random House advertisement for Jane Jacob's <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i>, 1961. (From Flickr Creative Commons, by pdxcityscape, <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/78175613@N00/5694287441/sizes/o/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/78175613@N00/5694287441/sizes/o/</a>)</p>	
Figure 34.....	121
<p>Protestors in front of Pennsylvania Station, 1962. Eddie Hausner, photographer. (From <i>New York Times</i>, August 2, 1962)</p>	

Figure 35 .....	126
Demolition of Pennsylvania Station, 1964-1965. Aaron Rose, photographer. (From the Collections of the Museum of the City of New York)	
Figure 36 .....	127
Interior demolition of Pennsylvania Station, 1964-1965. Aaron Rose, photographer. (From the Collections of the Museum of the City of New York)	
Figure 37 .....	138
<i>Left:</i> The B.F. Goodrich Company building (1780 Broadway) received landmark designation. <i>Right:</i> The adjacent building at 225 West 57 <sup>th</sup> Street was denied landmark designation. (From “The Tyranny of the Glass Boxes,” <i>The New York Times</i> , April 21, 2014)	
Figure 38 .....	139
Protestors gather outside Rizzoli Bookstore, 2014. Michael Appleton, photographer. (From “It’s Leaving 57 <sup>th</sup> Street, but Rizzoli Bookstore Vows Sequel”, <i>New York Times</i> , April 11, 2014)	

## Introduction

In 1960, a passionate committee led by violinist Isaac Stern succeeded in saving Carnegie Hall, a building the *New York Herald Tribune* described at the time as “a concert hall that everybody loved but nobody liked.”<sup>1</sup> Stern's intervention ensured the famous concert hall's longevity even though its demolition had appeared inevitable a short time earlier. Carnegie Hall's protection was a pivotal victory in the history of American historic preservation, yet scholarship has done little to situate it within the larger context of postwar architecture and preservation ideology. Instead, the preservation of Carnegie Hall has been relegated to brief synopses in larger volumes on postwar architecture or considered in the context of the Hall's musical, rather than architectural, history. Often simplistically described as a victory for growing popular support of architectural preservation in the postwar period, scholars have overlooked the complicated interests involved in the five-year struggle to protect the structure from demolition.<sup>2</sup>

Historic preservation has been practiced in the United States since the late-nineteenth century, but it was rarely undertaken during the 1950s in New York City, which experienced an economic boom and rapid commercial development in this period. The mid-1960s have long been identified as a turning point in American historic

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Richard Schickel and Michael Walsh, *Carnegie Hall, the First One Hundred Years* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987), 231.

<sup>2</sup> The preservation of Carnegie Hall is briefly recounted in Robert A. M. Stern, *New York 1960: Architecture and Urbanism between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 1112; Anthony C. Wood, *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 252.

preservation ideology. Specifically New York City's Landmarks Preservation Law of 1965 permitted government intervention on behalf of historic preservation and helped to professionalize the preservation discipline. Postwar ideology set a precedent for current preservation methodology and New York City's local approach to historic structures remains heavily based on the legislation implemented in 1965. Carnegie Hall is a unique case study within this history of postwar architectural preservation because it offers an unusual success story. Stern, and his committee of musicians, politicians, and lawyers, prevented demolition of the renowned concert hall prior to passage of the Landmarks Preservation Law and formation of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. They overcame a number of obstacles: simultaneous construction of Lincoln Center's new Philharmonic Hall, Carnegie Hall's perceived lack of architectural significance, and an economic incentive to redevelop the site for commercial use.

The nature of this preservation success prompts a number of questions. How was Carnegie Hall's preservation accomplished in the progress-driven culture of postwar New York City? Why was the Hall's "mediocre" architecture protected at a moment when more widely admired structures, such as Pennsylvania Station, were destroyed? What characteristics of Carnegie Hall — architectural, social, or historical — gave the building value in the eyes of its preservationists? I will address these questions in this thesis, examining how the motives of Carnegie Hall's preservationists aligned with those of the preservation movement as whole and what set their methods apart from contemporaneous efforts.

My research is substantially based on primary source material from the Carnegie Hall Archives and the New York Public Library. To understand the motives that prompted Carnegie Hall's preservation, I have focused primarily on the work of historians who approach preservation from the perspective of historical narrative and collective memory, seeking to more fully understand the social and cultural forces that prompt preservation. This includes the recent work of Daniel Bluestone, Randall Mason, and Max Page, as well as earlier contributions to preservation theory by Daniel Lowenthal and William Murtagh. These scholars emphasize an understanding of cultural context alongside architectural aesthetics when examining historic architecture. Throughout my case study of Carnegie Hall, I will explore the architectural, historical, economic, and legal components of postwar culture in New York City.

To establish the cultural and artistic context surrounding Carnegie Hall's preservation effort, the first chapter of this thesis narrates the building's historical background and establishes the transformation of historic preservation practice in New York City after World War II. I briefly explore the forces that prompted postwar architectural destruction, including New York City's urban renewal programs. I have limited this chapter's narrative of historic preservation to New York City, although preservation trends varied by region across the country. The second chapter explores the protection of Carnegie Hall as a case study of New York City's historic preservation movement in the 1950s. I illustrate how American preservation ideology changed from the nineteenth century to the postwar period and demonstrate how economic forces necessitated the development of innovative methodology. The final chapter compares the

preservation of Carnegie Hall and the unsuccessful attempt to save Pennsylvania Station. I examine similarities and differences in preservationists' motives and methods to identify how the two cases typify the changing preservation ideology of the 1950s and 1960s. Reexamining Pennsylvania Station's demolition provides a foil to Carnegie Hall's success. Such a contrast identifies elements that contributed to Carnegie Hall's successful preservation and provides insight into the institution of 1965's Landmarks Preservation Law.

The successful preservation of Carnegie Hall, despite its denigrated architecture, bears implications for today's preservation methodology. Guidelines implemented by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission stipulate that buildings may be preserved for their representation of the architectural, historical, or cultural heritage of New York City. Preservationists are often motivated to justify architectural protection, however, by arguing primarily for the aesthetic value of a building. Should a historic structure lack notable architectural characteristics, attention is often drawn instead to the value of maintaining collective memories. Using the case study of Carnegie Hall, I will argue for a perspective on preservation that acknowledges the benefit of prioritizing a historic structure's economic potential, rather than presuming that a constituency values the aesthetics or the memories associated with a structure. Through two complimentary case studies, I will demonstrate that focusing too heavily on aesthetics, at the expense of formulating a feasible economic plan, can prove detrimental to the success of a preservation attempt. An emphasis on economics means that preservation cannot be viewed as solely the work of architects and historians but requires a deeper look at who is

leading preservation attempts and the nature of the political structure involved. The following chapters argue for the preeminence of economic power in preservation and conclude with a discussion of the implications for contemporary preservation battles.

## **Chapter 1: Carnegie Hall's Early History and Postwar Architectural Context**

One might enumerate the items of high civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left...No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools... no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class... Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life -- especially in the American life of forty years ago, the effect of which, upon an English or French imagination, would probably as a general thing be appalling.

Henry James, *Hawthorne*, 1879

As New York City became a focal point of American culture in the second-half of the nineteenth century it struggled to establish itself as a city on par with the capitals of Europe. Post-Civil War wealth and technological innovation provided New York City a newfound prominence in the 1870s and prompted the construction of new cultural institutions intended to transform “a provincial backwater into the realm of world class cities.”<sup>3</sup> Despite having the prosperity necessary to establish itself commercially, New York City lacked visible symbols of culture. European countries had the advantage of a history stretching back thousands of years from which to draw their national pride. Turn-of-the-century author Henry James captured the inferiority complex New Yorkers felt in this era as their young city suffered endless comparisons to long-established

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<sup>3</sup> Robert A. M. Stern, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 11–13.

European metropolises. A New York native who spent much of his life in England, James understood the American struggle with the brevity of the country's history. He observed New York City transform almost beyond recognition to an island of skyscrapers as it sought commercial and cultural preeminence. James used his stories to express observations about the rapid pace at which New York changed. In his famous 1881 short story, "Washington Square," one of his characters explains the pressure New Yorkers felt to keep up with the city's transformation:

At the end of three or four years we'll move. That's the way to live in New York - to move every three or four years... It's because the city's growing up so quick - you've got to keep up with it. It's going straight up town - that's where New York is going... They invent everything all over again about every five years, and it's a great thing to keep up with the new things.<sup>4</sup>

This New York City, consumed with progress, architectural innovation, and cultural aspiration, produced Carnegie Hall in 1891.

To understand why one of New York City's preeminent cultural institutions faced demolition it is necessary to trace the history of Carnegie Hall's popularity and identify the postwar cultural forces that posed a threat to nineteenth century architecture. Carnegie Hall was initially a means of addressing the United States' perceived lack of culture and, although it became a stage for the world's greatest musical talent, time decreased its architectural value. This chapter will outline the historical background of Carnegie Hall and establish the cultural context for the Hall's threatened demolition and subsequent preservation. Carnegie Hall was threatened with demolition due to changes in American

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<sup>4</sup> Henry James, "Washington Square," in *The New York Stories of Henry James* (New York, N.Y.: New York Review of Books, 2006), 199–381.

artistic culture and urban planning philosophy between the late-nineteenth century and the postwar period. I will establish the initial positive reception of Carnegie Hall's construction and argue that the postwar dismissal of Hall's architecture stemmed from a new focus on redevelopment and modernism's distaste for revival architectural aesthetics. Carnegie Hall's fate was made additionally vulnerable by the postwar penchant for urban renewal and the nascent state of the "modern" preservation movement. Establishing the context of the first sixty years of Carnegie Hall's existence and positioning the building's preservationists within the history of historic preservation in New York City provides a foundation for the details of the Hall's preservation in the next chapter.

### **Carnegie Hall as a Cultural Moment**

New York City's lack of cultural institutions, especially performance venues, contributed to its sense of cultural inadequacy in the late-nineteenth century. Paris had its famous Opera House, Milan had La Scala, and England had Albert Hall. The founders of Carnegie Hall sought to fill a perceived need in the musical community of New York because, although the city had a number of music venues, it had no acoustically suitable spaces for the performance of orchestral and choral music. Having moved to the United States from Germany in 1871 and established a small oratorio society, musician and conductor Leopold Damrosch passionately believed that New York City needed a music

hall.<sup>5</sup> Leopold Damrosch's son, Walter, shared his desire. Upon meeting wealthy industrialist Andrew Carnegie on a ship bound for Europe in 1887, Walter Damrosch broached the topic of New York City's need for a new concert hall. A few years later, in 1889, Carnegie formed the Music Hall Company of New York.<sup>6</sup> Carnegie and Damrosch held positions on the Music Hall Company's Board of Directors, which acquired land on the corner of Fifty-Seventh Street and Seventh Avenue, where the new music hall would be erected. The cultural center of Manhattan was shifting uptown during the late-nineteenth century, making the musical hall's chosen location integral to its success.<sup>7</sup>

In 1890, the Music Hall Company's Board of Directors decided to name their new concert venue "Music Hall founded by Andrew Carnegie" due to Carnegie's substantial financial contribution to its establishment. Although willing to provide an initial financial endowment, Carnegie expected the music hall to support itself financially, because he believed that a concert venue should be financed by its community.<sup>8</sup> In spite of his original intentions, however, Carnegie continued to underwrite the music hall for years after its establishment in deference to his wife's love of music.<sup>9</sup> On May 13, 1890, the cornerstone of the "Music Hall founded by Andrew Carnegie" was laid; on May 5, 1891, the concert hall opened with the first American performance of a work by composer Peter

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall* (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1960), 19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 28–29; Theodore O. Cron and Burt Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1966), 12.

<sup>7</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; Ethel Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall, First* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1936), 34.

<sup>9</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 35.

Tchaikovsky.<sup>10</sup> Although the music hall opened to great acclaim, its name produced unintended consequences. The title “music hall” carried lowbrow connotations in the European tradition, prompting the Board to rename it “Carnegie Hall” several years after its opening. In general, New York’s musical community lauded the creation of Carnegie Hall and celebrated the potential of this American music hall to rival those of Europe. To many, the creation of Carnegie Hall represented the United States’ “musical coming of age.”<sup>11</sup> On May 3, 1891, a few days before Carnegie Hall’s opening, the *New York Tribune* summarized the city’s vision for this new venue: “The eyes of European musicians are being directed more and more longingly in the direction of America, and there are evidences that they are beginning to see our country as something besides the land of dollars.”<sup>12</sup>

Generally well received at the time of its design, Carnegie Hall is the best-known work of William Burnett Tuthill.<sup>13</sup> Tuthill was secretary of Walter Damrosch’s Oratorio Society as well as a board member of Andrew Carnegie’s Music Hall Company of New York. He had experience not only in architectural design but also in what was then referred to as the “accidental science” of acoustics.<sup>14</sup> By the time he received the

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<sup>10</sup> Schickel and Walsh, *Carnegie Hall, the First One Hundred Years*, 15; Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 61; Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 38–50.

<sup>11</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 50.

<sup>12</sup> Quote in Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Tuthill was assisted by a number of associate architects including the firm Adler and Sullivan, Waldemar R. Start, and Richard M. Hunt. Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 34; Emily Ann Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* (MIT Press, 2004), 29, f60.

<sup>14</sup> Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 36; Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 31.

commission to design Carnegie Hall, Tuthill had already developed a reputation for his knowledge of acoustic design and had lectured on the subject at a number of universities. Although he would never design another concert hall and was not a particularly prolific or well-lauded architect, Tuthill's skill at acoustic design established Carnegie Hall's reputation. No original documentation has been found explaining how he developed the praised acoustics of the space, but according to his son Burnet, Tuthill studied the qualities of a number of internationally renowned music venues.<sup>15</sup> The superb acoustic nature of the building has been attributed to a variety of Tuthill's design choices such as the curved boxes, the avoidance of a domed ceiling, and the inclusion of velvet on the interior to absorb unwanted reverberations and echoes.<sup>16</sup>

Aesthetically, Carnegie Hall is a quintessential example of late-nineteenth century American architecture (Fig. 1). In a period when the innovation of structural steel began to revolutionize construction techniques, Carnegie Hall's design remained relatively conservative both structurally and architecturally. During the 1880s, architects in New York began to employ cage and skeleton construction, metal structural framing systems that reduced the load on a building's exterior walls.<sup>17</sup> This load reduction meant that

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<sup>15</sup> Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 74; Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 34; Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 76–78.

<sup>17</sup> In cage construction a system of steel or iron framing supported the building's floors, but not the exterior walls. Skeleton construction, which most resembles modern curtain wall systems, used steel or iron framing to carry the weight of both the floors and the exterior walls. In the latter case, any masonry applied to the surface was entirely decorative rather than load-bearing. The New York Produce Exchange building, finished in 1884, was one of the first uses of cage construction in New York City and the Tower Building, erected in 1889, has been credited as the earliest example of complete skeleton construction in New York City. For further reading see Sarah Bradford Landau, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper, 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 121–123.



Figure 1. Carnegie Hall (Music Hall founded by Andrew Carnegie), New York, NY, 1891.

masonry could now be used as a decorative infill rather than a structural component, reducing the thickness of the walls and overall weight of the building. Rather than employing innovative steel construction, however, Carnegie Hall's masonry walls are traditionally load-bearing and therefore several feet thick at their base, contributing to the structure's heavy aesthetic.<sup>18</sup> Upon its opening, the *New York Times* praised the resulting heaviness of the building, which they deemed "effective and imposing."<sup>19</sup> A more innovative element of Carnegie Hall's design was the use of Guastavino vaulting for the foyer roof. Guastavino vaulting, an architectural system composed of thin decorative tiles bound by Portland cement, did not enjoy popularity in the United States until after 1895 when it was used in McKim, Mead, and White's Boston Public Library building.<sup>20</sup> Composed of reddish-brown Roman brick and decorated with belt courses, round terracotta arches, and intricately detailed pilasters, Carnegie Hall's style can be defined as Romanesque Revival (although the building is often alternatively labeled as Neo-Italian Renaissance).<sup>21</sup> (Fig. 2) Such an eclectic architectural choice was common in the late-nineteenth century and Carnegie Hall's design was initially well received. Promotional materials from the Hall's opening described it as "stately, rich, and dignified" and therefore "fitting to its intended purpose."<sup>22</sup> The *New York Times* praised its "dignified

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<sup>18</sup> Schickel and Walsh, *Carnegie Hall, the First One Hundred Years*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> "It Stood the Test Well," *New York Times*, May 6, 1891.

<sup>20</sup> John Allen Ochsendorf and Michael Freeman, *Guastavino Vaulting: The Art of Structural Tile*, 2013, 54.

<sup>21</sup> A report compiled at the time of renovations to the Hall classified it as Romanesque Revival, "United States Department of the Interior National Park Service Architectural Data Form" (Department of the Interior, 1981); "Landmarks Preservation Commission Report," June 20, 1967.

<sup>22</sup> "United States Department of the Interior National Park Service Architectural Data Form."



CARNEGIE MUSIC HALL,  
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Figure 2. Carnegie Hall (Music Hall founded by Andrew Carnegie), New York, NY, 1908.

and successful facade” despite their dislike of the mansard roof and use of copper in the frieze and cornices.<sup>23</sup> Prior to his death in 1929, Tuthill designed a number of alterations to Carnegie Hall and the resulting modifications led to an awkward massing of the building that prompted criticism in the decades following their construction (Fig. 3). In 1891, construction finished on the original building, a six-story structure with a French-style mansard roof that contained the primary concert hall. In 1894, the mansard roof was replaced with an additional floor of double height studio spaces and skylights intended for the New York School of Drama, the Metropolitan Art School, the Barnard Club, and the Proctor Studio. Constructed at the same time as the main hall, the so-called “lateral building” contained additional studios, a recital hall, and a “chapter room” for the meeting of fraternal organizations (Fig. 4).<sup>24</sup> In 1896, ten additional stories of studios were added to the lateral building and its recital hall was converted into a theater rented to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. A third connected building ran along the back of the main concert hall and the lateral building on Fifty-Sixth Street and contained a variety of studios as well as piano and reception rooms. In 1896 this building was extended to the corner of Seventh Avenue (Fig. 5).<sup>25</sup>

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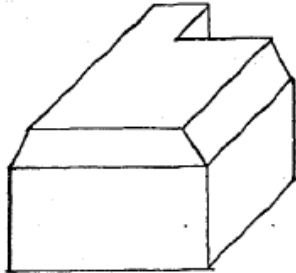
<sup>23</sup> “It Stood the Test Well.”

<sup>24</sup> Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 39,44; Sharon S. L. Ryder, “Carnegie Hall: Better than Ever,” *Architecture* 76, no. 2 (February 1, 1987): 60–65; “United States Department of the Interior National Park Service Architectural Data Form.”

<sup>25</sup> Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 42; Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 34; “United States Department of the Interior National Park Service Architectural Data Form”; Ryder, “Carnegie Hall: Better than Ever.”

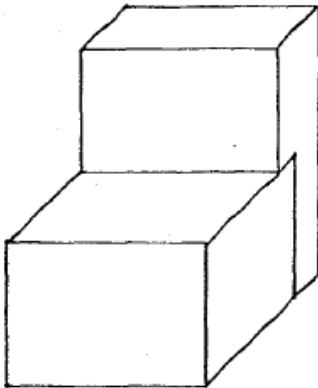
Attachment B

Major alterations and additions with dates:



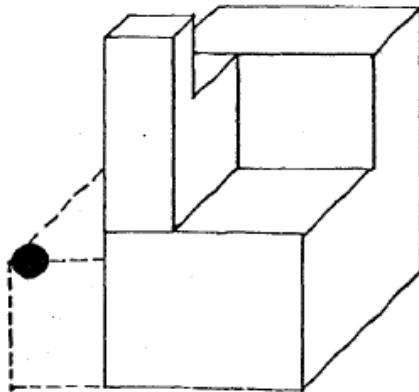
**1**

- 1887 - Carnegie Agrees to Funding
- 1889 - Excavation Begins
- 1891 - "Music Hall" Opens



**2**

- 1894 - Rear Building Added  
Mansard Removed, Roof  
Raised and Skylights  
Added.



**3**

- 1896 - Top Floors Added to  
Lateral Building
- 1898 - Officially Called  
"Carnegie Hall"
- 1903 - Adjacent Property Purchased  
"Rembrant Building"
- 1929 - Space Altered on Street  
For Rentable Property

Figure 3. Illustration of Carnegie Hall additions with dates, 1981.



Figure 4. Carnegie Hall, mansard roof replaced with skylights and rear building added, New York, NY, 1895.



Figure 5. Carnegie Hall, additional stories added to “Lateral Building”, New York, NY, 1905.

Carnegie Hall was further altered over the years to accommodate technological advances and increase the building's profitability. After Andrew Carnegie's death in 1919, Carnegie Hall became part of the Carnegie residuary estate. In 1925 realtor Robert E. Simon purchased the financially struggling Hall, having already invested in much of the surrounding property.<sup>26</sup> Carnegie Hall's purchase agreement contained a clause prohibiting the building from being demolished or used for anything other than its intended purpose for the next five years.<sup>27</sup> The inclusion of this clause assuaged rumors that the Hall would be demolished when it changed hands. In an attempt to remedy Carnegie Hall's precarious financial state, Simon began investing in the building's modernization and maintenance. In 1929, Simon converted many of the studios into living quarters and rented office space to professionals such as music publishers and publicity agents. To increase revenue, Simon also permitted the addition of street-level storefronts to the concert hall. Many nineteenth century buildings in New York City were demolished in the early 1900s because they did not meet building and fire code requirements, but Carnegie Hall's continued maintenance assured its longevity. The building fared less well in the postwar period, however, and production of the 1946 film *Carnegie Hall* damaged the shell above the stage, adversely affecting sound quality in the

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<sup>26</sup> Schickel and Walsh, *Carnegie Hall, the First One Hundred Years*, 106; "Carnegie Hall Then and Now" (Carnegie Hall Corporation, 2001); Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 230.

<sup>27</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 230; Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 84.

front rows.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, only minimal upkeep was undertaken during the 1940s and by the mid-1950s the interior furnishings had grown increasingly dingy and the facade was noticeably neglected (Fig. 6).<sup>29</sup>

The variety of architectural modifications Carnegie Hall experienced did not damage its status as a prized musical institution. Almost overnight the Hall had become the prestigious cultural center its founders intended. Carnegie Hall rapidly established itself as the place where both American and European musicians wanted to play to achieve musical success in the United States. In his 1960 book, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, author Richard Schickel summarizes the early success of the music hall:

One of the results [of Ignace Paderewski's 1891 piano performance] was the identification of the new hall as the American summit that had to be conquered if the new artist, or visiting virtuoso, was to achieve full financial and artistic success here. It was the largest, the most elegant and most important hall in the most important city in America. Until it existed, New York had lacked only the proper setting for the music jewels it displayed. Once that setting existed, New York's musical status was assured.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout Carnegie Hall's existence musicians and concert attendees alike spoke of the building in reverent, often religious, terms. Ethel Peyser's book, *The House that Music Built*, illustrates public sentiment for the concert hall in the early twentieth century.

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<sup>28</sup> Installation of lighting equipment for the film punctured the ceiling shell and adversely affected the sound quality in the front rows of the Hall until renovations undertaken in the 1980s. Ryder, "Carnegie Hall: Better than Ever"; James J. R. Oestreich, "Carnegie Hall's Great Sound Can No Longer Be Taken for Granted," *The Connoisseur* 218, no. 914 (March 1, 1988): 72–76.

<sup>29</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 241.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.



Figure 6. Carnegie Hall, exterior, New York, NY, 1960.

In 1935, Peyser published her book tracing the history of the Hall and the musicians who performed there. The book's introduction, written by Walter Damrosch, lauds the acoustics of the Hall as unexcelled by any venue in the United States. Damrosch further states that "time has made [Carnegie Hall] a sacred temple, a shrine to be treasured by all lovers of music."<sup>31</sup> This reverent tone characterizes descriptions of the Hall throughout the book, both those by Peyser herself and those of the notable musicians she quotes. In less than half a century, Carnegie Hall had already acquired a mythic status in the memories of New York City inhabitants.

### **The Twentieth Century Transforms Architectural Taste**

Yet, twenty-five years after Peyser extolled Carnegie Hall, the building's demolition appeared inevitable. Carnegie Hall remained a well-respected musical establishment in the 1950s yet changes to the cultural and artistic climate of postwar New York City impacted public perception of its architecture. Carnegie Hall's musical prestige remained easy to defend, but the Hall's supporters had become increasingly apologetic for its architectural mediocrity.

Carnegie Hall's revival aesthetic had become outdated almost as soon as the building was constructed. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago proved to be a decisive event, polarizing opinions on America's predilection for eclectic, revival architecture. The Exposition pavilions were designed in Beaux-Art style, much to the

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<sup>31</sup> Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, xvi.

chagrin of Louis Sullivan and those who advocated “modern” architecture. Sullivan famously derided the 1893 Exposition’s revival aesthetic in his 1924 book *The Autobiography of an Idea*. With candor, Sullivan voiced opinions that would influence American architectural philosophy through the 1950s and 1960s: “The damage wrought by the [1893] World’s Fair will last for half a century from its date, if not longer... Thus we now have the abounding freedom of Eclecticism, the winning smile of taste, but no architecture. For Architecture, be it known, is dead.”<sup>32</sup> In Sullivan’s opinion the new machine age required an innovative type of architecture that expressed its structure. To design a building in steel and then cover it with a Greek, Gothic, or Renaissance facade was anathema. Sullivan was not alone in espousing the need for stylistic change in the architectural community; similar sentiments had been rising among architects discontent with the eclecticism that characterized much construction following the Civil War. This ideology became increasingly pervasive as the Modern design philosophy of architects and critics such as Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson became more influential in the United States. The International Style that Hitchcock and Johnson promoted offered a cohesiveness of design that stood in sharp contrast to revival styles based on a seemingly arbitrary compilation of architectural elements.<sup>33</sup> Many architecture critics at the turn of the twentieth century concluded that revival styles were outdated and that architectural design needed to jettison the past and instead incorporate new structural techniques. Although use of revival styles would persist during the first several decades

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<sup>32</sup> Louis H. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York, N.Y.: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), 325.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 33–37.

of the twentieth century, distaste for eclectic and derivative architectural designs lingered into the 1950s. Architects and designers became contemptuous not just of styles differing from their own preferences but also any use of the past as a source for the present.<sup>34</sup>

The implications of this perception can be seen clearly in the 1960 book *The World of Carnegie Hall*. The author introduces Carnegie Hall's architecture by noting that the era of the building's construction is obvious from its facade: "One need only glance at the building itself to recognize the period in which it was born. Its exterior is ungraceful, vaguely reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance. This bespeaks, to the observer of American architectural taste, only one period, the Victorian, or 'anything-you-can-do-we-can-do-better,' era."<sup>35</sup> Going even further, the author supports his assessment with an unidentified quote describing Carnegie Hall as a "fat, brown-and-buff Romanesque pile."<sup>36</sup> Carnegie Hall typified the Victorian era to the postwar generation and it was no longer a celebrated architectural achievement. Instead Carnegie Hall was "a serenely confident manifestation of a prosperous and certain age which was, in this case, built well, if somewhat heavily and eccentrically."<sup>37</sup> Even in the 1930s, Carnegie Hall had been described as a building that one visited not for its architecture but for its "spirit."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Lewis Mumford, ed., *Roots of Contemporary American Architecture: A Series of Thirty-Seven Essays Dating from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972).

<sup>35</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 3.

This left anyone who desired to protect the building with little architectural criteria suitable for defending their opinion.

### **Historic Preservation Precedent in New York City**

Carnegie Hall's vulnerable postwar position was largely the result of New York City's emphasis on urban redevelopment, both public policies of urban renewal and financial pursuits of private investors. Changing architectural ideology brought not only new stylistic preferences, but also highly destructive approaches to city planning. Preservationists faced the challenge of developing new means of successfully protecting existing architecture in light of these cultural changes. Attempts to save culturally and historically significant buildings from demolition can be found as early as the nineteenth century in the United States. These early preservation efforts, however, arose from different motivations than those of the postwar period and therefore had different applications.<sup>39</sup> The historic preservation precedent that existed in New York City could not easily address postwar preservation concerns.

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<sup>39</sup> In this chapter, the history of historic preservation is limited to New York City. For further discussion of preservation practices in New York City before 1920, see Randall Mason, *The Once and Future New York: Historic Preservation and the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). On historic preservation across the United States see Daniel M. Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2011); Max Page and Randall Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2004); William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (Pittstown, N.J: Main Street Press, 1988); James Marston Fitch, *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); Robert E. Stipe, ed., *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, The Richard Hampton Jenrette Series in Architecture and the Decorative Arts (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

From the 1890s to the 1920s, organized historic preservation efforts primarily concerned themselves with saving buildings that held significant connections to the period of the Revolutionary War. The trauma of the Civil War, sweeping changes brought by industrialization, and increased immigration prompted many Americans to seek refuge in an idealized Colonial Era past. As a result patriotic organizations, made up of members who could trace their Anglo-Saxon heritage to the United States' founders, initiated the vast majority of architectural preservation efforts and focused their energies on buildings that could function as didactic monuments of early American history and the patriotic values of the Founding Fathers.<sup>40</sup> In 1904 the Sons of the Revolution restored and speculatively reconstructed New York City's Fraunces Tavern, the site of George Washington's farewell to his officers in 1784 (Fig. 7).<sup>41</sup> The Daughters of the American Revolution preserved a number of buildings in New York City including the Morris-Jumel Mansion, which they converted to a museum (Fig. 8). In addition, a few preservation organizations not predominantly patriotic in nature arose in the nineteenth century. These groups, such as the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society (ASHPS), founded in 1895, adhered to a similarly nationalistic ideology. Preservation efforts at the time, therefore, centered on statues, plaques, parks, battlefield, and homes associated with iconic men and events of the American Revolution. Buildings such as

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<sup>40</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 121; David Lowenthal, "The Place of the Past in the American Landscape," in *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geography*, ed. David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 108.

<sup>41</sup> Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940*, Historical Studies of Urban America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 115; Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, 144.



Figure 7. Frances Tavern prior to speculative reconstruction, between 1900 and 1906.



Figure 8. Morris-Jumel Mansion, Edgecomb Avenue & 160<sup>th</sup>-162<sup>nd</sup> Streets, New York, NY, 1936.

Alexander Hamilton's estate, Poe Cottage (Fig. 9), and Theodore Roosevelt's birthplace (Fig. 10), were purchased and repurposed as museums. Converting notable buildings into museums re-imagined them as prompts for telling stories about the past. The desire to create this type of "memory infrastructure" arose from a cultural notion that history taught through the physical remains of the past could more effectively maintain collective memory than written history alone.<sup>42</sup> In a rapidly changing city such as New York, preserved buildings provided visual "narrative threads" for its inhabitants. These buildings held memories of the past but were also used to teach values, thereby bettering the city, and consequently the nation. Such an ideology placed primary emphasis on the historical rather than architectural significance of a place and promoted a segregation of history from everyday life to create objects of veneration.<sup>43</sup>

This desire for architectural preservation also acknowledged that ephemerality already characterized the nature of New York City's built environment. At the end of the nineteenth century portions of the city's architectural history had been erased entirely. Dutch New Amsterdam was completely destroyed through fires and development and a sense of regret surfaced over the loss of seventeenth century buildings such as the city hall where George Washington took his oath of office.<sup>44</sup> In New York City, therefore,

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<sup>42</sup> Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, 131–134.

<sup>43</sup> Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940*, 113.

<sup>44</sup> E. Wm. Allison, "Historic Preservation in a Development-Dominated City: The Passage of New York City's Landmark Preservation Legislation," *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 3 (March 1, 1996): 352.



Figure 9. Edgar Allan Poe Cottage in Bronx, NY prior to its move, ca. 1910.

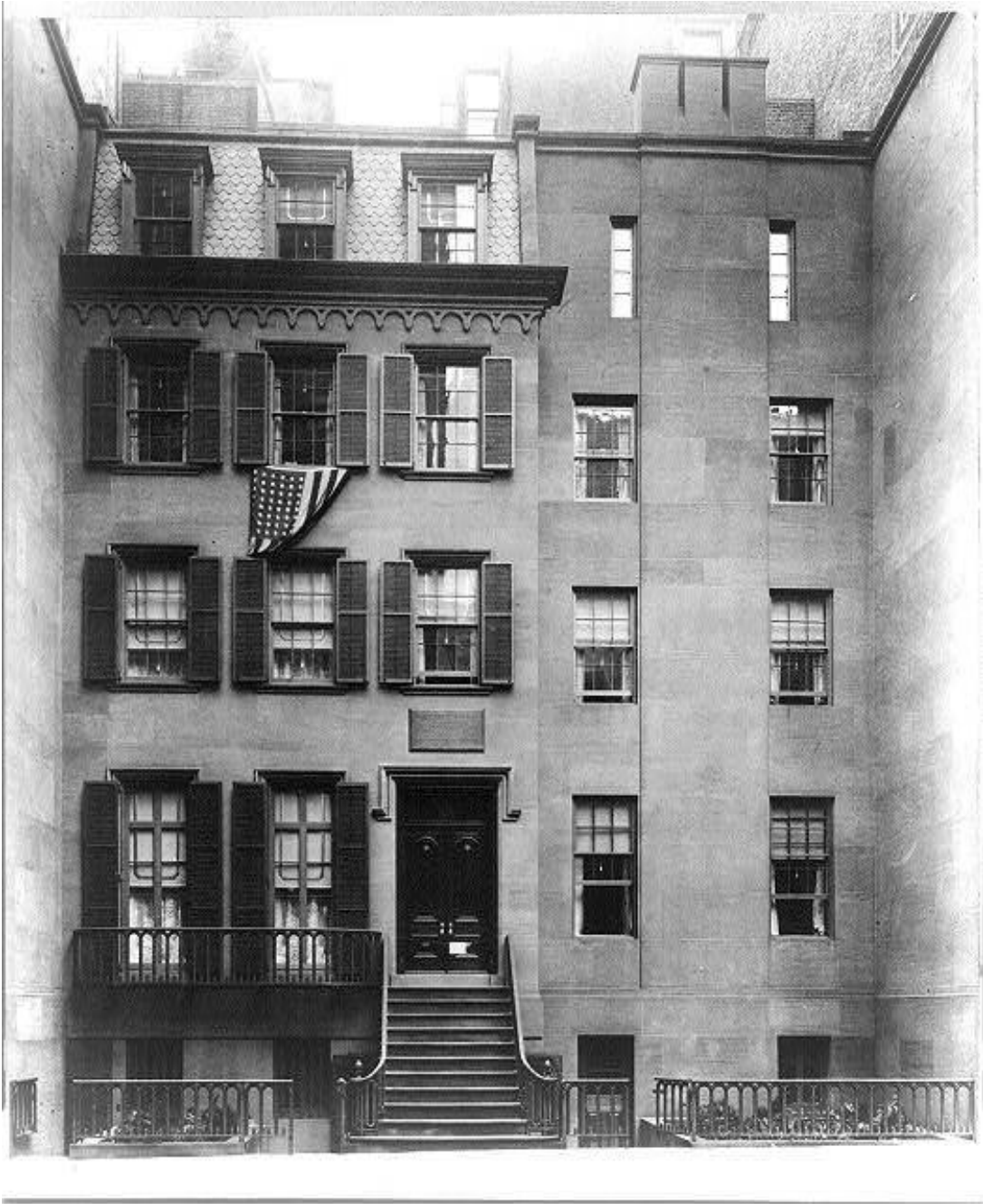


Figure 10. Birthplace of Theodore Roosevelt, New York, NY, 1923.

the initial desire to curate a landscape of memories emanated from a realization that rapid development threatened to completely erase the past. Hence David Lowenthal explains this need for heritage as a reaction to runaway innovation and the ensuing sense of loss and change.<sup>45</sup> New York City's preservation of heritage was intended to have a stabilizing effect on its rapidly redeveloping urban space and solidify feelings of security in the face of increasing cultural heterogeneity.

Historic preservation in New York City did not follow a linear progression but rather continued to rise and fall in popularity over the years. Preservation activity decreased substantially during the Great Depression due to financial constraints. During the 1930s contributions to the protection of architectural history were made primarily through government sponsored programs, such as the Historic American Buildings Survey which put architects and historians to work cataloging and photographing historic structures.<sup>46</sup>

### **New York's Postwar Development and Preservation Movement**

After World War II the trajectory of historic preservation in New York City became inextricably intertwined with new government policies regarding urban renewal. As in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, postwar preservationists reacted to the impact of rapid change on New York City's environment. Unlike those earlier

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<sup>45</sup> David Lowenthal, "The Heritage Crusade and Its Contradictions," in *Giving Preservation a History* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 19–44.

<sup>46</sup> Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, 136.

efforts, however, postwar preservationists primarily faced the impact of urban renewal programs. Such ambitious government-supported redevelopment projects spurred a preservation paradigm shift. In an attempt to establish the legitimacy of early preservation efforts in the United States, recent scholarship has downplayed the importance of the postwar preservation movement as a reaction to urban renewal.<sup>47</sup> Yet I believe the impact of urban renewal, its inextricability from economics and political policy, cannot be neglected in a discussion of postwar historic preservation. The most vocal representatives of new architectural and urban ideology in postwar New York City worked in direct opposition to urban renewal programs and the destruction they produced.

Government-initiated urban renewal projects are most famously a postwar phenomenon but the concept of slum clearance gained acceptance in the late-nineteenth century. One of the most famous slum clearance activists was Jacob Riis who adhered to the philosophy of “environmental determinism,” the belief that the character of the physical environment directly shaped individual and social behavior. Riis established fundamental arguments that would shape future slum clearance ideology and the urban renewal programs that would follow, stressing the importance of the physical environment and the need for strong government intervention. Because his ideology was heavily influenced by the City Beautiful movement, Riis advocated for the creation of

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<sup>47</sup> Mason, *The Once and Future New York*, x; Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, 9.

parks as a replacement for tenements. Such plans rarely considered the low income residents who were displaced when their residences made way for parkland.<sup>48</sup>

In the 1930s the United States began to adopt government policies of urban renewal and slum clearance became the default solution to “fix” impoverished neighborhoods. Architectural historian Max Page attributes this emphasis on demolition to a variety of factors, among which is the ideology of Daniel Burnham whose “make no little plans” philosophy complemented the concept of “planning by destruction” which took hold in the early-twentieth century. Baron Haussmann’s dramatic renovation of Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century, America’s attraction to Beaux-Art city planning at the turn of the twentieth century, and Le Corbusier’s ideology of surgically removing the existing infrastructure to implement urban order had paved the way for more destructive methods of city planning. By the 1930s the options available to urban planners had widely increased in scope. In this era, therefore, housing reform became synonymous with slum clearance and urban renewal.<sup>49</sup>

In New York City, the controversial figure of Robert Moses implemented urban renewal plans with fervor; by the 1950s he had turned the slum clearance ideology of the early-twentieth century into an efficient program. Moses began his rise to power in the 1930s as the first city-wide commissioner of parks and has been credited with perhaps “[having] a greater impact on the physical character of New York City than any other

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<sup>48</sup> Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940*, 81–92.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

individual.”<sup>50</sup> Famous for statements such as “when you operate in an overbuilt metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat ax,” Moses realized his vision for a massive modernization of New York City’s infrastructure.<sup>51</sup> His plans were initially well received and considered beneficial to the progress of New York City, but by the 1950s Moses had become a divisive figure whose image was blemished by a plethora of unpopular plans for interstate highways, urban renewal programs, and public housing projects.<sup>52</sup>

In 1955, Robert Moses spearheaded the Lincoln Square Renewal Project, a typical example of his controversial urban renewal ideology and a project that directly impacted the fate of Carnegie Hall. By bulldozing eighteen blocks of San Juan Hill, a lower-class neighborhood in Manhattan’s Upper West Side, Moses made way for the new Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (Fig. 11). Although San Juan Hill had a reputation for substandard quality housing, its demolition sparked vocal public dissent when it became clear that at least 6000 low-income families would be displaced without proper provision for their relocation.<sup>53</sup> According to historian Anthony Flint, Lincoln Center “epitomized

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<sup>50</sup> Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson, eds., *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York*, 1st ed (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2007), 65.

<sup>51</sup> Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940*, 69.

<sup>52</sup> For further reading on Robert Moses and his impact on New York City’s urban environment see Stern, *New York 1960*; Ballon and Jackson, *Robert Moses and the Modern City*; Anthony Flint, *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took on New York’s Master Builder and Transformed the American City*, (New York: Random House, 2009); Roberta Brandes Gratz, *The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs* (New York: Nation Books, 2011); Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975).

<sup>53</sup> Samuel Zipp, “The Battle of Lincoln Square: Neighbourhood Culture and the Rise of Resistance to Urban Renewal,” *Planning Perspectives* 24, no. 4 (October 2009): 421.

## LOCATION

The Lincoln Square Project is located in westerly midtown Manhattan in an area northwest of Columbus Circle. It comprises eighteen city blocks bounded on the north by West 70th Street; on the east by Broadway and Columbus Avenue; on the south by West 60th and West 66th Streets; and on the west by Amsterdam Avenue and the westerly line of the property of the New York Central Railroad. Adjoining the site on the north is a predominantly residential neighborhood, centered about the 72nd Street express stop of the IRT subway. To the east are commercial and residential structures. To the southeast is the newly constructed New York Coliseum and the site of the proposed Columbus

Circle Apartments. Adjacent to these is Columbus Circle, a focus of transportation facilities. St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church and School are directly south, and to the west is Amsterdam Houses. Further west is the proposed site of the New York Times and the West Side Highway.

The site offers excellent opportunity for redevelopment with its ready travel facilities to all parts of the city and its central location for the residential structures. The latter are close to both the Hudson River with its view and the adjacent express highway with its surrounding parks and playground facilities. A few blocks to the east Central Park provides additional facilities for recreation.



Figure 11. Proposed Location of Lincoln Square Renewal Project, 1956.

the Moses' approach - out with the old, in with contemporary architecture and wide open plazas."<sup>54</sup> (Fig. 12) The modern architecture and new plazas intended for the site become the home of the New York Philharmonic, City Opera, New York City Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera. Prior to the design of Lincoln Center, the New York Philharmonic had been located at Carnegie Hall and served as the Hall's largest source of income. With the promise of a larger and more contemporary music hall, many people felt that Carnegie Hall had become obsolete.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to government-facilitated architectural demolition, a postwar increase in private development also accelerated the destruction of New York City's architectural heritage. Since the nineteenth century New York City's residents acknowledged that ceaseless transition characterized their city. As early as 1845, Philip Hone, a prominent New York City resident and mayor, famously recorded in his diary that "Overturn, overturn, overturn! is the maxim of New York. The very bones of our ancestors are not permitted to lie quiet a quarter of a century, and one generation of men seem studious to remove all relics of those which preceded them."<sup>56</sup> This trend accelerated when the United States emerged from World War II with a new level of wealth and prestige. New York City in particular reaped the benefits of this prosperity which included a building boom beginning in 1949. New York's post-World War II status as the greatest city in the world required an appearance of progress and by the 1950s progress had become

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<sup>54</sup> Flint, *Wrestling with Moses*, 27.

<sup>55</sup> Zipp, "The Battle of Lincoln Square."

<sup>56</sup> Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1889), 260.

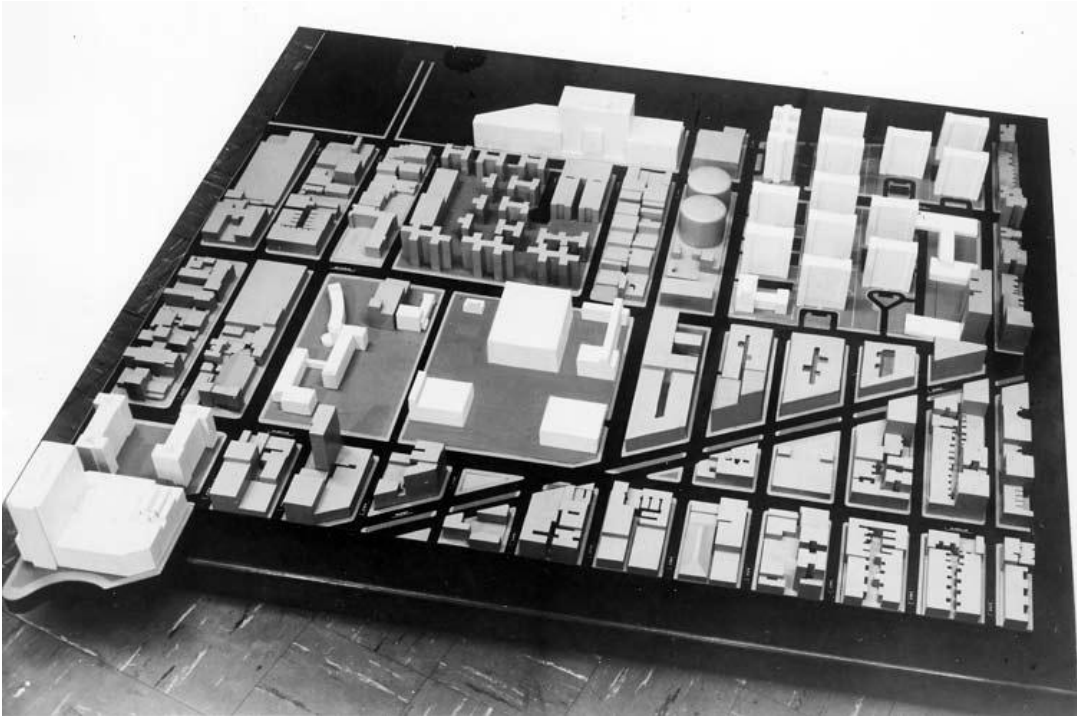


Figure 12. Lincoln Center Model, 1957.

synonymous with new construction. According to historian Anthony Wood: “New, instant, fast, and flashy were the adjectives of the 50s. The new American dream did not include old neighborhood or old homes. It did not even include yesterday’s hotels or apartments, or office buildings. Being out of style was just as much a death sentence as being inefficient.”<sup>57</sup> Trading the past for the future was accepted as the inevitable price of highly desirable progress.

In response to this desire for progress, New York City’s business center expanded northwards during the first half of the twentieth century and the office buildings of Midtown Manhattan began to encroach on residential neighborhoods. As a result, between 1940 and 1965 many Midtown residences were demolished to make way for new office buildings. Although Manhattan’s West Side did not suffer as much outright demolition, many of its buildings suffered extensive modification while being modernized. Buildings of many functions faced demolition in the midst of postwar New York City, most often to make way for new office buildings or parking lots. The theater district surrounding Times Square experienced widespread rebuilding in the 1940s and 1950s and a large number of sports facilities and hotels were also torn down at this time.<sup>58</sup> Carnegie Hall is merely one example of the countless buildings threatened by New York City’s drive for visible signs of progress and cultural relevance.

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<sup>57</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 111.

<sup>58</sup> Postwar architectural demolition will be addressed in greater detail in the following two chapters. For detailed accounts of the buildings demolished between 1945 and 1960 see Stern, *New York 1960*, 1096–1105; Wood, *Preserving New York*, 73.

The extensive nature of New York City's architectural losses after World War II prompted a renewed desire to promote architectural preservation. Architects, historians, and critics began to contemplate how they could counter the effects of urban renewal, commercial building development, and Modernist city planning principles. Questions of how to raise public awareness and create successful preservation programs were still in an incipient stage when Carnegie Hall was threatened in 1955. Preservation was no longer solely about protecting patriotic values in the face of ideological threats but rather challenging the economic and political forces that facilitated such widespread destruction.

In 1952, Talbot Hamlin began to write articles advocating for legally mandated preservation. An influential architectural historian and critic, Hamlin helped found the Society of Architectural Historians and would later start the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals. His efforts to draw attention to the necessity of historic preservation in New York City began a decade earlier in 1941 when he started compiling a list of "buildings of architectural value erected since 1865, some of which may have been demolished since."<sup>59</sup> In the early 1950s Hamlin expanded this list at the behest of the Municipal Art Society (MAS), an organization that spearheaded a resurgence of interest in historic preservation in the 1950s. MAS attempted to raise awareness of historic preservation concerns within the general public and also within the architecture profession. The organization hoped to have a list of New York City's notable buildings ready to distribute at the 1952 meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH). Hamlin's list grew

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<sup>59</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 115.

with the input of members of MAS and SAH and when the list was presented in January of 1952 it had been expanded to contain 296 buildings.<sup>60</sup> MAS also tried to increase public awareness of architectural demolition through a number of exhibitions. It held four exhibitions between 1952 and 1955 which showcased renderings and photographs of Manhattan's most notable buildings, some of which had been slated for destruction. Although these exhibitions did not immediately make historic preservation a mainstream concern, they helped to bring the issues at stake to public awareness.<sup>61</sup> MAS also publically published a 300 building "Index of Architecturally Notable Structures in New York City" in 1957. A year later 10 percent of the structures listed had already been torn down.<sup>62</sup>

This increased interest in preservation awareness prompted a reevaluation of preservation methodology. Prior to the 1950s, historic preservation had been largely the work of dedicated individuals or organizations. As a reaction to postwar architectural demolition, a number of preservationists began pushing federal, state, and local government to take an increasingly active role in preservation. One of the Municipal Art Society's goals was to implement legislation that would allow government intervention in the preservation process. Albert Bard, a dedicated member of MAS since 1901, had been interested since the beginning of the century in implementing aesthetic regulation in New York City. Bard pursued this goal throughout the 1940s and 1950s with the hope that

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 252.

government regulation of architecture would prevent unnecessary demolition and unattractive new construction.

After studying the legislation of numerous American cities that had already adopted policies of aesthetic regulation, including Santa Barbara, San Diego and New Orleans,<sup>63</sup> Albert Bard drafted a bill for the New York State legislature that read:

To provide for places, buildings, structures, works of art and other objects having a special character, or special historical or aesthetic interest or value, special conditions or regulations for their protection, enhancement, perpetuation or use, which may include appropriate and reasonable control of the use or appearance of neighboring private property within public view, or both. In any such instance, such measures, if adopted in the exercise of the police power, shall be reasonable and appropriate to the purpose, or, if constituting a taking of private property, shall provide for due compensation, which may include the limitation or remission of taxes.<sup>64</sup>

Known as the Bard Act, this legislation was passed in 1956, mobilized by the threatened demolition of Grand Central Station, and was the first step in establishing a legal precedent for government intervention in historic preservation efforts in New York.<sup>65</sup> New York City would pass additional preservation laws during the next decade: in 1960 the battle to save Carnegie Hall would culminate in innovative state and city

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 104; Albert Bard, "Albert Bard Papers," Manuscripts and Archives Division, Box 8, Folder 6, New York Public Library.

<sup>64</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 141, f47.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 141–144.

legislation and in 1965 the New York City Landmarks Preservation Law would be established.<sup>66</sup>

The Bard Act allowed for the implementation of city-specific aesthetic regulations and preservation policies yet practical implementation remained challenging without a concerned constituency. Bard's bill permitted government intervention but did not compel it. As a result, preserving historic structures in New York City, even on an aesthetic basis, proved challenging. In order to be heard, these new voices needed to overcome decades of engrained apathy toward the devastation of New York's urban environment.

This increased interest in historic architecture corresponds to a moment in which the architecture and planning professions began rethinking their current practices. Anthony Wood states that "at the time the Bard Act became law, New York City was experiencing the beginnings of a rediscovery of its history and its architectural heritage and confronting a continuing stream of headlines prophesizing impending doom for some of the city's signature buildings."<sup>67</sup> A number of influential books began to challenge the status quo in the architecture and urban planning professions as well as shape public perception of how the physical city ought to function. In 1954 Andreas Feininger and Susan Lyman published *The Face of New York*, a book featuring comparative photographs of the city from the past and the present that reasserted the rapidity with

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<sup>66</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1091.

<sup>67</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 157.

which New York was changing.<sup>68</sup> In the same year, John Kouwenhoven published *The Columbia Historical Portrait of New York* and in 1960 Kevin Lynch released *The Image of the City*.<sup>69</sup> Throughout the 1950s and 1960s architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable used her column in the *New York Times* to advocate for new ways of viewing the city and in 1960 Jane Jacobs published her famously influential book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.<sup>70</sup> Huxtable, Jacobs, Hamlin, and others, sought to reveal the harm that current city planning philosophies had exerted on the urban environment by prioritizing new construction over existing architecture. Unlike early-twentieth century preservationists, the shapers of postwar preservation ideology showed no interest in creating museums or preserving vestiges of a patriotic past. Rather, they viewed the city holistically and espoused the opinion that buildings of all styles and ages contributed to the health of a properly functioning urban space. They promoted architectural diversity over the artificial uniformity of Modern city planning.

The controversy surrounding Carnegie Hall's fate occurred as a result of the cultural trajectory of New York City. A distaste for revivalism, an economic and political interest in new construction, and the ubiquity of architectural demolition, all contributed to the ease with which Carnegie Hall was slated for demolition. Much of the difficulty that ensued while trying to protect Carnegie Hall arose from the state of historic

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<sup>68</sup> Andreas Feininger and Susan E Lyman, *The Face of New York; the City as It Was and as It Is* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954).

<sup>69</sup> John Atlee Kouwenhoven, *The Columbia Historical Portrait of New York; an Essay in Graphic History in Honor of the Tricentennial of New York City and the Bicentennial of Columbia University* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953).

<sup>70</sup> For a concise account of Huxtable's career and notable works see David Dunlap, "Ada Louise Huxtable, Champion of Livable Architecture, Dies at 91," *New York Times*, January 7, 2013.

preservation efforts at the time. Postwar preservationists faced a new set of challenges: government-condoned demolition, economic incentives for replacing existing buildings, and a cultural obsession with progress. Organized preservation rarely occurred and therefore practical procedures did not exist. The next chapter will illustrate the lessons to be learned through Carnegie Hall's successful preservation and the precedent set for future efforts.



of a historic monument as fundamentally patriotic in nature, nor exhibiting any noteworthy aesthetic qualities that would prompt support from the established preservation-minded architectural community. Carnegie Hall's preservationists faced the challenge of opposing the development-oriented nature of postwar New York City. This culture that condoned urban renewal and the rapid construction of commercial buildings devalued existing architecture largely because it was less financially profitable. Since the threat to Carnegie Hall was primarily economic in nature, preservationists protected the building's longevity by ensuring its continued functionality. Although concerned New Yorkers initially defended Carnegie Hall with proclamations of its irreplaceable historical and cultural value, I will argue that preservation success ultimately resulted from an adept ability to use economic and political resources to their advantage.

The successful implementation of an innovative government-facilitated solution, one not based in private philanthropy, must be credited to Isaac Stern. As this chapter will demonstrate, Carnegie Hall's preservation would have been impossible without Stern's charisma and personal connections to New York City's elite. In addressing the success of Stern's preservation effort, I will challenge the emphasis contemporary historic preservation scholarship places on the role of memory in preservation. Carnegie Hall's preservation demonstrates that a desire to maintain collective memories through existing architecture did motivate vocal defense of the building. Yet, while such motives certainly helped to establish a passionate, if limited, constituency for Carnegie Hall's defense, they formed an inadequate argument for the building's preservation.

Building upon the foundational background of both Carnegie Hall and American historic preservation in Chapter 1, this second chapter will expound upon the postwar forces that prompted Carnegie Hall's threatened demolition. Seemingly unstoppable architectural destruction taking place on a large scale prompted changes in city planning and architectural ideology in the late 1950s. These changes impacted how architects and citizens viewed existing architecture and therefore led to the creation of new historic preservation policies intended to counter the governing role economics played in real estate development. In order to demonstrate the innovative and influential nature of Carnegie Hall's preservation, I will establish what the historic preservation movement looked like in the 1950s and how that corresponded to broader cultural changes in architecture and city planning ideology. Placing Carnegie Hall in the context of other postwar preservation efforts and describing the specific challenges faced by its preservationists will demonstrate that Isaac Stern and his committee employed unique methodology that played a vital role in New York City's eventual implementation of government-facilitated historic preservation.

### **Architectural Destruction in New York City after WWII**

In *Keeping Time*, scholar William Murtagh broadly defines preservation as “a concern for the rate of consumption of buildings.”<sup>72</sup> This feared depletion of New York City's existing architecture means that in order to understand Carnegie Hall's preservation it is necessary to look at the forces that stimulated the destruction of

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<sup>72</sup> Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, 20.

architecture in postwar Midtown Manhattan. When the United States emerged victorious from World War II it experienced an economic boom that rejuvenated a building industry previously beleaguered by the Great Depression. This economic prosperity particularly profited New York City, the chosen site of the new United Nations headquarters and the new financial capital of the world (Fig. 13).<sup>73</sup> As I have discussed, Manhattan had long been a site of rapid architectural change and the decades immediately following World War II were no exception.

Both public and private initiatives drove New York City's postwar urban redevelopment. The city's newfound wealth facilitated the implementation of urban renewal programs that dramatically transformed New York City's urban landscape. As outlined in Chapter 1, New York City first experienced government sponsored urban renewal programs in the 1930s, and during the 1940s and 1950s Robert Moses continued to implement such projects on an escalating scale. As well as massive slum clearance initiatives such as the Lincoln Square Renewal Project and Manhattantown (now Park West Village), Moses' proposals for redevelopment included a Brooklyn-Queens Expressway through Brooklyn Heights, a road through Washington Square Park (Fig.14), a Brooklyn-Battery Bridge that threatened Castle Clinton (Fig. 15), and an attempt to extend a parking lot into Central Park, not all of which were realized.<sup>74</sup> In postwar New York City, progress become synonymous with new construction, urban renewal, and new transportation infrastructure.

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<sup>73</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 14.

<sup>74</sup> Gratz, *The Battle for Gotham*, 39–41.



Figure 13. United Nations Headquarters, New York, NY, 1966.

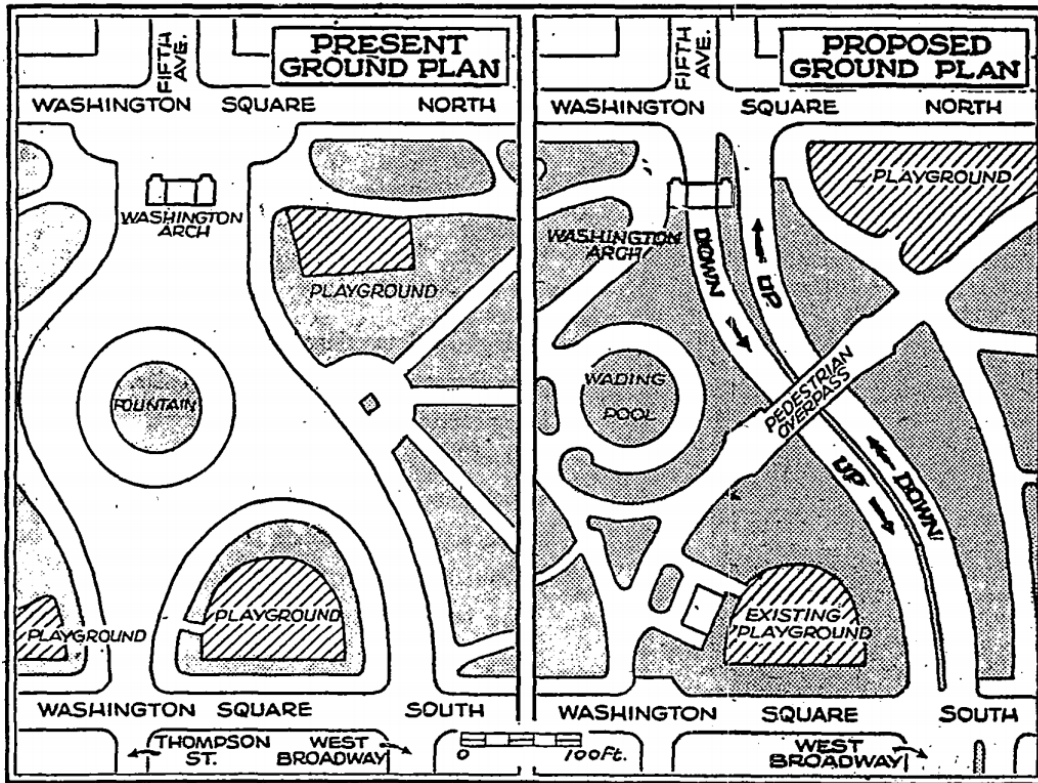


Figure 14. Proposed extension of Fifth Avenue through Washington Square Park.



Figure 15. Robert Moses with model of proposed Brooklyn-Battery Bridge, 1939.

New York City's financial prosperity facilitated private as well as government-driven development. As a consequence of Manhattan's rapid rebuilding, Midtown real estate became an increasingly limited and highly desirable resource. Real estate developers devised a solution: they could maximize profit on small parcel of lands by building upwards as high as possible. The structural technology that made high-rise architectural designs feasible become commonplace in the early twentieth century, but few tall buildings were constructed in New York during the late 1930s and 1940s (Fig.16). As a result, in the 1950s many relatively low buildings remained on highly valuable land. The financial profit to be gained by demolishing low-rise buildings and replacing them with commercial skyscrapers was irresistible for real estate developers.

This ubiquitous desire for increased real estate profitability initiated a five-year long battle over the fate of Carnegie Hall. When Carnegie Hall was constructed in 1891 its Fifty-Seventh Street location was an unusual choice for a major cultural institution, but, by the 1950s Manhattan's business center shifted so far northwards that the concert hall was located in a thriving commercial center. As property values escalated, maintaining a concert hall on such valuable land became an increasingly impractical investment. Carnegie Hall produced a profit, but the revenue garnered for its investors fell far short of the site's potential.<sup>75</sup> With his stockholders in mind, Robert E. Simon Jr.,

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<sup>75</sup> "Finale at Carnegie Hall?," *New York Herald Tribune*, July 26, 1956; Theodore O. Cron and Burt Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1966), 5; Richard Schickel and Michael Walsh, *Carnegie Hall, the First One Hundred Years* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987), 178.



Figure 16. Aerial view of New York City looking south on Manhattan, 1945.

president of Carnegie Hall, Inc., sought to sell the property in 1955 and news quickly spread that the music hall would be replaced with a commercial building.<sup>76</sup> News outlets reported on the impending demolition of Carnegie Hall without much surprise; although it would be a shame for New York City to lose the Hall, they understood why Simon would wish to increase the profitability of the property.<sup>77</sup> The *New York Times* asserted “the private owners cannot be blamed if they wish to turn their property to a profitable use commensurate with their investment for which they are in business.”<sup>78</sup>

Although the threat to replace Carnegie Hall with a commercial building was not unusual and many responses to the Hall’s imminent demolition lacked concern for its future, the musical community of New York City quickly reacted to news of the sale with vocal indignation. Carnegie Hall’s staff and tenants were particularly affronted by this threat to their beloved building’s future. Ethel Peyser notes that, “a Carnegie Hall love-potion seems to have been imbibed by all those working in and for the Hall from the beginning.”<sup>79</sup> John Totten, Carnegie Hall’s house manager and employee for over fifty years, fell into this category.<sup>80</sup> Within weeks of learning that Carnegie Hall likely faced demolition, Totten formed the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall, an organization made

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<sup>76</sup> “Drive Set to Bar Sale of Carnegie,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1955; John Beaufort, “On and Off Broadway,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 15, 1955.

<sup>77</sup> Beaufort, “On and Off Broadway”; “To Save Carnegie Hall,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1955.

<sup>78</sup> “Carnegie Hall,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1955.

<sup>79</sup> Ethel Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, First (New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1936), 160.

<sup>80</sup> Beaufort, “On and Off Broadway”; Schickel and Walsh, *Carnegie Hall, the First One Hundred Years*, 7; Peyser, *The House That Music Built: Carnegie Hall*, 160.

up of “long-time tenants of the hall, artists’ representatives, and others determined that Carnegie Hall [should] not suffer the fate of the Empire, Center, and Vanderbilt Theaters.”<sup>81</sup>

Postwar demolition trends affected a wide variety of buildings but they had a particularly devastating impact on the theater district. The well-regarded Empire and Vanderbilt theaters were only two of at least a dozen Manhattan theaters demolished between 1940 and 1960, typically to make room for office buildings and parking lots (Fig. 17).<sup>82</sup> The Center Theater suffered a different but equally common fate: developers renovated its interior space until the building no longer resembled the original design.<sup>83</sup> Often constructed with quickly outdated technology, theaters and performing arts centers were particularly susceptible to obsolescence.<sup>84</sup>

During the 1950s, dissenting voices began reacting to specific cases of architectural demolition and the city planning policies that facilitated such destruction. Modernist planning philosophies of the early-twentieth century continued to govern postwar urban planning strategies both in the United States and internationally. Historic preservation had long been an issue of contention in the Modern approach to city planning, whose practical implementation usually privileged new construction over existing buildings. In the late 1940s, however, international events began to challenge the

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<sup>81</sup> “Drive Set to Bar Sale of Carnegie.”

<sup>82</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1100.

<sup>83</sup> Nathan Silver, *Lost New York* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), 67.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.



Figure 17. Empire Theater, New York, NY, date unknown.

central tenets of urban design. The catastrophic damage suffered by many European cities during World War II necessitated plans for urban reconstruction on an unprecedented scale. Tasked with rebuilding efforts, CIAM (the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture), the international face of Modern architectural ideology, confronted the challenge of how to approach the existing historical fabric of cities in need of reconstruction. A number of younger members felt that CIAM needed to adopt an approach to preservation that was mindful of how much historic architecture meant to a city's inhabitants and how little the public could relate to stark Modern designs. At CIAM 6, which occurred in 1947 and centered on the issue of post-war urban reconstruction, J.M. Richards introduced a discussion of "the common man," broaching ways in which modern architecture could develop itself in a "more human direction." Richards hoped that if architects incorporated historic buildings in reconstruction plans they could provide a sense of continuity for the city's inhabitants.<sup>85</sup> Two years later, at CIAM 7, Helena Syrkus reiterated the concern that CIAM was neglecting an opportunity to re-use the past. Post-WWII reconstruction efforts had begun and she cited the desire of Eastern European nations for a greater respect of existing architectural heritage.<sup>86</sup> While such sentiments were not shared by the majority of CIAM members, they were signs of a growing discontent with the impersonal nature of modern designs. Such discontent continued to escalate internationally. By the late 1950s Modernism's approach to urban space had been

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<sup>85</sup> Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000), 177–178.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 194. Sigfried Giedeon replied to Syrkus that, "We love the past, and its well known that I had great difficulty at CIAM because I was for the past. But the modern historian, like the modern painter, doesn't gaze at the past."

employed long enough for the public to experience its ramifications globally and for dissatisfaction with the unfettered obliteration of the old in favor of the new to emerge.<sup>87</sup>

New York's architecture critics voiced concerns similar to those of the international architectural community, arguing that genuine consideration of healthy human interaction with the city had been neglected for the sake of tall buildings and congested roads. In a series of *New Yorker* articles published throughout the 1950s, critic Lewis Mumford argued that such building trends revealed a lack of forethought on the part of New York's city planners and developers as well as a blatant disregard for the consequences of their architectural choices.<sup>88</sup> Rapid development of tall commercial buildings with high tenant capacity increased traffic and changed transportation patterns in New York City, yet developers seemed oblivious to the impact of their haphazard planning.

Concern with demolition and excessive renovation did spark a number of successful preservation attempts throughout the 1940s and 1950s. During this time, preservation typically extended to wealthy single-family homes, with efforts organized by a relative or affluent individual who had a personal connection to the threatened building. This was the case, for example, with the Fifth Avenue mansion of James Buchanan Duke (Fig. 18) which was donated by his daughter to New York University's Institute of Fine Arts in the late 1950s and the Willard D. Straight house which was sold

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>88</sup> Twenty-six of Mumford's essays from his "Sky Line" column in the *New Yorker* are collected in Lewis Mumford, *From the Ground Up: Observations on Contemporary Architecture, Housing, Highway Building, and Civic Design* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, 1956).



Figure 18. James B. Duke townhouse, 1 East 78th Street, 1935.



Figure 19. International Center of Photography (originally the Willard and Dorothy Whitney Straight house), 1130 Fifth Avenue, ca. 1979

to the National Audubon Society in 1952 (Fig. 19).<sup>89</sup> Occurring in the midst of ideological changes but at a moment when preservation had not yet become the norm, Carnegie Hall, as a for-profit institution, presented a new type of preservation challenge.

### **John Totten Initiates Preservation Efforts**

The timeline of Carnegie Hall's preservation can be viewed in light of two separate preservation attempts. The first effort to save Carnegie Hall took the form of a fundraising committee. Working closely with Lawrence Tibbett, an opera singer who performed at Carnegie Hall on numerous occasions, and Joseph Taubman, who served as the committee's legal advisor, house manager John Totten quickly began fundraising with a plan to buy the property in cash from owner Robert E. Simon Jr. The Committee to Save Carnegie Hall could then establish a non-profit corporation to run the venue, with the assumption that acquiring tax-exempt status would reduce operating costs enough to maintain the Hall's profitability.<sup>90</sup> Simon appears to have been sympathetic towards Totten's effort and offered to cooperate with the aims of the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall as much as possible. Although he had received a bid to buy the Hall for \$4.5 million, Simon offered to sell Carnegie Hall to Totten's committee for \$4.2 million and to postpone its sale until the feasibility of fundraising plans could be evaluated.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1110–1111. The house is now the International Center of Photography.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.; "Rally Is Called for Carnegie Hall," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 12, 1955.

<sup>91</sup> In an early fundraising letter, Joseph Taubman relays the financial information that Robert E. Simon Jr. provided to him firsthand. Joseph Taubman, "Joseph Taubman to S. Earl Honig," July 21, 1955, Joseph Taubman Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives; Robert E. Simon Jr. was "known to have a sentimental regard for the hall, feeling that it should remain a center of musical activity," according to "Drive Set to Bar

Aware that time was short, Totten quickly began advertising the Committee's need for funds through conventional fundraising strategies including newspaper and radio ads, rallies, pickets (Fig. 20), and benefit concerts (Fig. 21).<sup>92</sup> Initial fundraising efforts produced optimism; only a month after its formation, the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall announced that they had already raised \$30,000.<sup>93</sup> In mid-July, the *New York Herald Tribune* published an enthusiastic statement from John Totten in which he spoke of daily receiving letters and small monetary contributions.<sup>94</sup> It seemed as though public concern for Carnegie Hall could be measured tangibly. If public support remained strong, then purchasing the Hall outright was a feasible goal.

Despite the postwar emphasis on new construction, concerned citizens stated that they took pride in Carnegie Hall for a number of reasons: they valued it as a site of memory, a source of pride in their national heritage, and an acoustically unequalled concert venue. These qualities inspired New York City residents to protest on Carnegie Hall's behalf despite its unpopular architecture. As Chapter 1 illustrated, even the most fervent defenders of Carnegie Hall dismissed the building's architectural qualities. Carnegie Hall's acoustics mattered most to those who cared about the building, not its

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Sale of Carnegie," *New York Times*. He also would have been happy to sell the Hall to the Philharmonic if they had desired to purchase it according to "World of Music," *New York Times*, June 15, 1955.

<sup>92</sup> Advertisements were placed in New York City's English and foreign language newspapers as well as other country-wide publications, "Advertising and Marketing News," *New York Times*, November 5, 1955; An opening public rally took place at Carnegie Hall on June 14, 1955 and a week later, on June 27, a number of the Hall's ballet and opera students performed and picketed on Fifty-Seventh Street. "Rally Is Called for Carnegie Hall," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 12, 1955; "Dancing Pickets in 57th St. Show," *The New York Times*, June 28, 1955.


<sup>93</sup> "Dancing Pickets in 57th St. Show."

<sup>94</sup> Perkins, "Group Raises \$35,000 to Save Carnegie Hall."



Figure 20. Newspaper Clipping showing fundraising drive for Carnegie Hall, 1955.

**CARNEGIE HALL**  
*Debut*  
 Tuesday,  
 October 2, 1956  
 8:30 P. M.



**JACK BENNY**  
*Violin Soloist*

*in Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto*  
 with 70 members of the  
**New York Philharmonic Symphony**  
**ALFRED WALLENSTEIN** *cond.*  
 and **JENNIE TOUREL** *Mezzo-Soprano*

*Presented by:* **COMMITTEE to SAVE CARNEGIE HALL**  
 in cooperation with **FELIX G. GERSTMAN**  
*Proceeds to:* **SAVE CARNEGIE HALL and**  
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RETARDED CHILDREN**

*Tickets:* ORCH. (from Row 12)—\$6, 5.00  
 DRESS CIRCLE—\$4.00  
 BALCONY—\$3, 2.50, 2.00  
 1st TIER BOXES (seating 8)—\$200.00  
 2nd TIER BOXES (seating 8)—\$100.00

**TICKETS NOW AT CARNEGIE HALL BOX OFFICE**  
 and **FELIX G. GERSTMAN, 140 W. 42nd St. (LO 4-6990)**

DEPARTMENT OF MANUSCRIPTS & UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Figure 21. Ad for Jack Benny Benefit Concert for Carnegie Hall, 1956.

Romanesque style. Unlike contemporaneous preservation efforts, therefore, Carnegie Hall's most vocal proponents were not architects, academics, or historians. Although a 1954 threat to Grand Central Terminal had prompted over 200 people in architecture and planning professions to decry its proposed demolition, Carnegie Hall's initial defenders consisted almost exclusively of musicians, concert-goers, and tenants of the building's studios and apartments.<sup>95</sup>

Entreaties to save the building frequently appealed to New Yorkers' memories of concerts they had attended, rather than broaching the less popular topic of Carnegie Hall's architecture. Letters published by the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* from 1955 to 1960 reminisced about Carnegie Hall's long list of distinguished performers and employed personal appeals to remember the litany of outstanding musicians who had performed there.<sup>96</sup> "Won't you give a few minutes of thought to the deep loss you, personally, will suffer in an important part of your life if we lose the Hall?" pled a fundraising letter drafted by the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall.<sup>97</sup> The popularity of Andrew Carnegie's music hall had long been bolstered by the sentiment of its visitors and employees; it had appeal inspired by the events that had taken place within and the role it played in the lives of individuals and the community. Not only a concert venue but a landmark "that had in some way touched almost every New Yorker,"

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<sup>95</sup> In 1954, Architectural Forum published the open letter signed by 220 people, including Philip Johnson, Ely Jaques Kahn, Harmon Goldstone, Talbot Hamlin, and Vincent Scully. See Anthony C. Wood, *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 144.

<sup>96</sup> Francis Rogers, "Save Carnegie Hall!" *New York Herald Tribune*, October 28, 1955.

<sup>97</sup> Lawrence Tibbett, "Fundraising Letter," April 1959, Joseph Taubman Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives.

Carnegie Hall hosted decades of public rallies, presidential speeches, and religious proceedings.<sup>98</sup> New York City residents who valued Carnegie Hall, from the 1890s to the 1950s, treasured the memories it had given them, memories that created a sense of stability in the midst of a tumultuous urban space quickly ridding itself of any physical reminders of the past.

Recent scholars have increasingly acknowledged the importance of memory as a driving force of historic preservationists. Such was the case in postwar New York City, which clearly demonstrated a conflict between cultural desires for both new development and permanent markers of memory. Since the nineteenth century, the tenuous existence of New York City's architecture conflicted with an understanding of the inextricability of memories and the urban environment. New Yorkers had long looked for urban elements that would provide stability in the midst of a city characterized by change. Complaints about the ephemeral nature of New York City's architecture had been uttered since the nineteenth century and were further amplified by the destruction and urban development that plagued the postwar period.

The desire to preserve architecture as a means of protecting memories has been identified as a modern phenomenon produced by an escalating pace of life. Pierre Nora, while discussing the role of memory in French culture, acknowledges that modernity has forced a reevaluation of the role of monuments and sites of memory. Modernity, he states, has come with a "growing belief in a right, a capacity, and even a duty to

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<sup>98</sup> Robert A. M. Stern, *New York 1960: Architecture and Urbanism between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 1112.

change.”<sup>99</sup> This change has severed history and memory in such a way that sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) are necessary because “real environments of memory” (*milieux de mémoire*) are less prevalent. Nora also denotes a difference between memory and history: memory binds past and present whereas history is merely a representation of the past. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, famous for his work on collective memory, also established a connection between memory and the physical environment. Halbwachs posits that memory literally resides in the physical environment and cannot exist without tangible relics to help recall it.<sup>100</sup> The existence of tangible remains facilitates memories and solidifies our relationship to the past.<sup>101</sup>

For architectural historians, the connection Nora and Halbwachs establish between the built environment and memory allows them to see architecture as a unique means of engaging with the past. Existing architecture becomes significant because it communicates differently than other forms of historical record. According to preservation scholar Daniel Bluestone:

Historic preservation engages history through the palpable character of place. It aims to preserve and interpret histories that are profoundly bound up with specific buildings and landscapes. In this respect preservation occupies an unusual place among the broad set of forms that chronicle history. That constellation ranges from private storytelling to public orations, from amateur genealogical charts to scholarly history monographs, from portrait painting to commemorative monument

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<sup>99</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, no. 26 (Spring 1989): 8.

<sup>100</sup> Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940*, 251 Max Page summarizes Halbwach’s philosophy of collective memories. Halbwach’s argued that memories are impossible without physical landscapes to store them and serve as touchstones for their recollection. .

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiii, 247.

construction, from museum exhibitions to movie productions. In contrast to these forms, the practice of preservation gets much of its evocative power from tangible qualities of place.<sup>102</sup>

Bluestone further describes preserved buildings as “physical anchors” that allow us to negotiate between past and future because they increase the credibility of historical accounts and make a narrative of the past accessible to future generations.<sup>103</sup> In this way preservation offered rapidly changing cities, such as New York, the benefit of mediating between existing buildings and new spaces while providing residents with continuity and environmental stability.<sup>104</sup>

Although they did not use the terminology of current scholars, many New York City residents understood the value of protecting “physical anchors” of memory in the face of rapid architectural demolition. In *A City Destroying Itself*, his 1965 diatribe against architectural destruction, Richard Whalen wrote that New York City existed “only in the present tense” with “no sense of obligation to future” and “no feeling of pride in the past.”<sup>105</sup> New York City’s reputation for placing priority on the present, rather than the past, clashed with the value placed on Carnegie Hall for perpetuating musical memories. “Carnegie Hall is a musical shrine,” asserted a letter to the *New York Post*, “and should stand as such, in memory to the countless fine musicians, conductors

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<sup>102</sup> Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, 18.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 21–29, 132.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 158 For further examples of the role that memory has played in American historic preservation, Bluestone’s book provides a variety of case studies spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

<sup>105</sup> Richard J. Whalen, *A City Destroying Itself: An Angry View of New York* (New York: Morrow, 1965), 60.

and composers who have performed there... Every large city in Europe has famous buildings, such as opera and ballet houses, churches and museums hundreds of years old, and no one there would dream of demolishing them to make way for newer modern buildings.”<sup>106</sup> In the *New York Herald Tribune* Francis Rogers asked readers to remember that “[Carnegie Hall] has the tradition of concerts by the outstanding musicians of the world. Those of us with long memories have heard there the great pianists, Paderewski, Joseph Hoffman, Gabrilowitsch, Bauer, and now Rubinstein, Myra Hess and many others.”<sup>107</sup> A 1957 article that bid farewell to Carnegie Hall tried to make a case that such strong memories of the Hall could live on without the building:

No building, however imposing, is likely to fill the same place in the hearts of thousands of New Yorkers as did the old Carnegie Hall. It will be at least a generation before New York will be able to forget. The old building had to give way and come down, of course. That is the inevitability of ‘progress.’ But what it stood for cannot easily be replaced... When those walls are razed there will be many persons passing by who will think of what was heard within them. There will be memories of Schumann-Heink, of Kreisler and Paderewski. There will be echoes of the orchestra under that batons of the world’s greatest conductors. The Beethoven Fifth, the Meistersinger Prelude and the Hallelujah Chorus. All those were a part of Carnegie Hall... Such things are imperishable. No new building can take them away, no wrecking crew destroy them. So long as men and women can remember it, Carnegie Hall will live on.<sup>108</sup>

By appealing to personal and collective memories of Carnegie Hall, its supporters conveyed the importance of maintaining New York City’s architectural past for the

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<sup>106</sup> A. Gabel, “Let Carnegie Stand!,” *New York Post*, February 8, 1957.

<sup>107</sup> Francis Rogers, “Save Carnegie Hall!,” *New York Herald Tribune*, October 28, 1955.

<sup>108</sup> “Good By To Carnegie Hall,” August 14, 1957, Robert E. Simon Jr. Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives.

future. Appeals for public support of Carnegie Hall strove to demonstrate that New York City was about to sacrifice more than merely sixty-year old masonry.

Calls for public support of preservation efforts appealed not just to the power of memory but also to concerns of national pride. Because Carnegie Hall was the closest American counterpart to the iconic cultural landmarks of Europe, many concerned New Yorkers questioned how the destruction of the Hall would impact New York City's international reputation. Sixty years after Andrew Carnegie established Carnegie Hall to ameliorate New York City's reputation for cultural insignificance, a sense of inferiority still affected the city. Despite emerging from World War II with a new identity of prestige and international influence, the United States lacked corresponding cultural importance. In the postwar period, the performing arts were given a greater role in American culture, as reflected by the vast number of new cultural centers built on urban renewal sites.<sup>109</sup>

Many citizens who cared about Carnegie Hall believed that preserving existing buildings was the fastest means of legitimizing American culture. In their opinion, Carnegie Hall had already helped to elevate America's cultural status, even if critics considered the Hall old and unfashionable. "The vast, time-stained pile on 57th St. has been for decades a symbol of [New York City's] cultural pre-eminence," wrote the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1956.<sup>110</sup> The Hall's advocates argued that European nations

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<sup>109</sup> Wesley Janz, "Theaters of Power: Architectural and Cultural Productions," *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 50, no. 4 (May 1997): 230. Janz provides many examples of postwar cultural centers built across the country in an attempt to increase the cultural prominence of the United States.

<sup>110</sup> "Finale at Carnegie Hall?," *New York Herald Tribune*, July 26, 1956, Robert E. Simon Jr. Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives.

would never consider demolishing such a concert hall: “Ours is the only great modern city without cultural stability. It is impossible to imagine Paris destroying her Opera or the Comedie Francaise, Milan her La Scala, or London the Albert Hall or Covent Garden Opera House.”<sup>111</sup> To demolish a venue celebrated by the twentieth century’s greatest musicians would only further reinforce the United States’ reputation for materialism and philistinism.

### **Obstacles to Successful Preservation**

Even though public sentiment initially seemed to be in Carnegie Hall’s favor, fundraising proved difficult in the cultural climate of postwar New York City. Residents of New York City treasured Carnegie Hall for reasons of sentimentality and national prestige, but promoting these motives proved ineffective against the economic and political challenges John Totten and his committee faced. The design of Lincoln Center, a project that encapsulated the progress-driven and finance-focused nature of postwar New York City, proved to be one such challenge. Concurrent planning for Lincoln Center irreparably complicated John Totten’s efforts to purchase Carnegie Hall (Fig. 22). Leading the Lincoln Square Renewal Project, Robert Moses proposed that the New York Philharmonic-Symphony move to a new concert hall in Lincoln Center when their lease at Carnegie Hall expired after the 1959 season. While waiting to see if Moses’ ambitious project would materialize, the Philharmonic remained noncommittal about whether they

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<sup>111</sup> Phyllis DeKay Wheelock, “Letters to the Times,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1957.



Figure 22. Model of proposed design for Lincoln Center, 1961.

would support the efforts of the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall.<sup>112</sup> The Philharmonic had long been Carnegie Hall's most important tenant, and many in the musical community believed it would be in the best interest of the orchestra to purchase Carnegie Hall and remain there. Unfortunately for Totten, in October 1955 the Philharmonic officially committed to Lincoln Center, leaving the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall with neither financial nor moral support.<sup>113</sup>

Built as part of an urban renewal project, the construction of Lincoln Center was highly politicized. John D. Rockefeller III, brother of current New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, worked closely with Clarence Francis, Chairman of the Board of General Foods, to convince some of New York's wealthiest foundations and individuals to contribute to the Lincoln Center project.<sup>114</sup> The involvement of high-profile individuals in Lincoln Center's development and publicity created a substantial roadblock for Carnegie Hall fundraising. Lincoln Center's wealthy and influential backers quickly criticized Totten's endeavor as an attempt to hinder the success of their new performing arts complex. Rather than complementing each other, the two venues were viewed as competing entities.<sup>115</sup> Two cultural images were pitted against each other, one a eclectic remnant of the nineteenth century, and the other a cultural center designed by the world's

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<sup>112</sup> Ross Parmenter, "Philharmonic Eyes Lincoln Square Site," *New York Times*, October 19, 1955.

<sup>113</sup> "Costs of New Hall," *The New York Times*, June 19, 1955.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 11,119; Stern, *New York 1960*, 680.

<sup>115</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 256. Harmon Goldstone recalled that the preservation of Carnegie Hall "seemed like a totally lost cause at the time, because you had all the steamroller pressure of Lincoln Center coming along and, obviously, they didn't want a competing concert hall."

most famous architects. Support of Lincoln Center required hostility towards Carnegie Hall; one could not support both the past and the future.

Lincoln Center needed to be a resounding success because its patrons believed their new cultural center would be the remedy for New York City's identity crisis. Promotional material advertised Lincoln Center in much the same way that Carnegie Hall had been described sixty years earlier. Architect Wallace Harrison pronounced Lincoln Center "a symbol to the world that we so-called monopolistic, imperialistic degenerates are capable of building the greatest cultural center in the world."<sup>116</sup> According to Clarence Francis, "New York City was just No-Man's-Land as far as its cultural reputation was concerned. Most visitors simply saw New York as a financial institution - it was profits, it was money, money, money. And this was wrong. The thing that fascinated me was that New York now could be made the cultural center of the world."<sup>117</sup> New York City, therefore, turned its vast new wealth to the creation of new cultural centers that would represent the United States, rather than promoting their existing history.

Lincoln Center threatened to replace Carnegie Hall not only as an image of American cultural preeminence, but also as the country's most esteemed acoustic space. Designed by Max Abramovitz with the latest acoustic technology and theories, Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall was touted as a superior replacement for Carnegie Hall (Fig.23). Although the general public seemed willing to accept two concert halls in

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<sup>116</sup> Janz, "Theaters of Power: Architectural and Cultural Productions," 233.

<sup>117</sup> Ralph G. Martin, *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 18.



Figure 23. Philharmonic Hall (now Avery Fisher Hall), front elevation, Lincoln Center, New York, NY, 1965.

New York City, many were indignant that Carnegie Hall would be torn down before the acoustic qualities of Lincoln Center could be evaluated. In the 1950s acoustics remained largely an experimental science and those with a vested interest in Carnegie Hall were skeptical that modern architectural design could create a space comparable to William Tuthill's acclaimed music hall.<sup>118</sup> A 1957 letter to the editor of the *New York Herald Tribune* described Lincoln Center as "still only a nebulous idea" and suggested that the move of the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony to "some new-fangled, modernistic housing development may prove the undoing of both."<sup>119</sup>

Because of this perceived rivalry between Carnegie Hall and Philharmonic Hall, Lincoln Center's construction significantly reduced the availability of funds for the purchase of Carnegie Hall. When John Totten's numerous fundraising attempts proved unsuccessful, he decided to hire a public relations consultant, Constance Hope, to explore alternative means of financing a bid to buy Carnegie Hall. Hope sought financial assistance from a wide variety of New York City's wealthy philanthropists and organizations, and even approached the Philharmonic, but received no notable financial contributions. Requests for funds encountered doubts that the Hall could be saved,

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<sup>118</sup> Margaret Starr Jessup, "Carnegie's Retention Urged," September 18, 1957; Loyola Ferrara, "Let's Fight for Carnegie Hall," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 15, 1960; "What's Wrong at Lincoln Center?," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 17, 1960.

<sup>119</sup> Samuel Youngquist, "The Met and Carnegie (Letter to the Editor)," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 25, 1957, JPB 91-18 Wallingford Riegger Papers Box 5, New York City Performing Arts Library.

sympathy for the cause but an unwillingness to commit monetarily, and fears that an attempt to protect Carnegie Hall would be seen as “bucking the Rockefellers.”<sup>120</sup>

Totten had believed that public support for the Hall would produce the funds necessary to purchase the building. Such a mindset, however, did not account for the impact of local politics. In order to raise the money necessary to purchase Carnegie Hall, Totten not only needed public support for his cause to exist, but to withstand the incentives for contributing to Lincoln Center. American preservation thus far had been largely a private endeavor, therefore Totten approached the problem in the same manner as preservationists before him, requesting donations from affluent individuals and philanthropists. Yet even fond memories of the Hall could not overcome the fear of potential donors that the project was not economically feasible and that involvement would place them on the wrong side of New York City politics.

Another challenge arose on July 24, 1956, when Simon announced that real estate investor Louis J. Glickman had purchased Carnegie Hall. In August of 1957 Glickman revealed his plans for a distinctive commercial skyscraper on Carnegie Hall’s site.<sup>121</sup> The architecture firm Pomerance and Breines hoped to “add variety” to the New York skyline by creating “the city’s first truly ‘colorful’ building”: a forty-four-story red tower that would cost \$22 million to build.<sup>122</sup> Not content with a solid red facade, the architects

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<sup>120</sup> Constance Hope, “Constance Hope to John Totten & Joseph Taubman,” Documentation of Services Rendered, (May 16, 1957); Constance Hope, “Constance Hope to John Totten,” Report of PR Services, (June 26, 1957), Joseph Taubman. 1957-1959, Carnegie Hall Archives.

<sup>121</sup> “Carnegie Hall to Be Razed,” *New York Daily Mirror*, July 25, 1956, Clippings Folder, Robert E. Simon Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives.

<sup>122</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1113.

envisioned a building clad in two-story-high steel panels faced with vermilion porcelain enamel. These prefabricated panels would alternate in a basket-weave design with tinted windows trimmed in gold-finished aluminum. Raised on three-story high “stilts,” this new commercial building would sit in a sunken plaza along Seventh Avenue with its entrance accessible via a pedestrian bridge (Fig. 24). As a nod to Carnegie Hall’s legacy, Glickman designated the new building’s mezzanine, foyer, lobby, and outdoor plaza as permanent exhibition spaces for “cultural works,” some of which would honor Carnegie Hall’s performers.<sup>123</sup>

Even Glickman’s announcement of plans for a bright red commercial building could not incite a public reaction strong enough to rejuvenate Totten’s fundraising effort. Robert Stern argues that overall there was no strong public reaction to the announcement of these plans and their impact on Carnegie Hall: “New Yorkers seemed to greet the loss of yet another historic building as inevitable.”<sup>124</sup> Postwar New York City’s response to architectural demolition remained caught between apathy and indignation. “There was a howl of outrage from music lovers,” Robert Schickel recalls, “but, by and large, New York quietly accepted the inevitability of the building’s destruction.”<sup>125</sup> Glickman’s purchase of the property met Simon’s need to assuage his stockholders’ desire for profit. Since John Totten had acquired only a fraction of the funds necessary to purchase

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<sup>123</sup> “A Forty-Four-Story Office Building Is to Be Built Where Carnegie Hall Now Stands,” *The New York Times*, August 8, 1957; John P. Callahan, “Red Tower Is Set for Carnegie Site,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1957; “A Red Tower Replacing Carnegie Hall,” *Life*, September 9, 1957; Stern, *New York 1960*, 1113; Richard Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall* (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1960), 412.

<sup>124</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1113.

<sup>125</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 412.

## A RED TOWER REPLACING CARNEGIE HALL

The building boom that has been making over the old brownstone face of Manhattan with new façades of gleaming aluminum, green glass and copper-tinted steel will reach a new degree of flamboyance in the skyscraper to be erected on the site of Carnegie Hall. When the famous concert place is demolished in 1959, a new office building faced in panels of bright red porcelain will go up in its place. To live up to the effect even more, Architects Pomerance and Brines have offset the building's windows in diagonal instead of vertical rows to produce a strange-looking checkerboard pattern. Standing on stilts sunk in a broad plaza, the \$22 million building will rise 44 floors above 57th Street.

All this was saddening news to the music lovers who have come to cherish old Victorian Carnegie Hall. Built as a business venture by Andrew Carnegie, a lover of Scotch bagpipe music, it opened in 1891 with a program partly conducted by Tchaikovsky. It became home for the New York Philharmonic and a magnet for the great musicians of the world. When it is demolished, U.S. music will lose one of its most acoustically perfect halls. But there was some good news for music lovers. As the office building goes up, Carnegie Hall's activities will move to Manhattan's new Lincoln Square cultural center and into a modern auditorium adjoining the new Metropolitan Opera House.



CARNEGIE HALL will offer two more full seasons of concerts and recitals before building is razed.

RED SKYSCRAPER will be reached from the street level by a foot bridge spanning its sunken plaza.

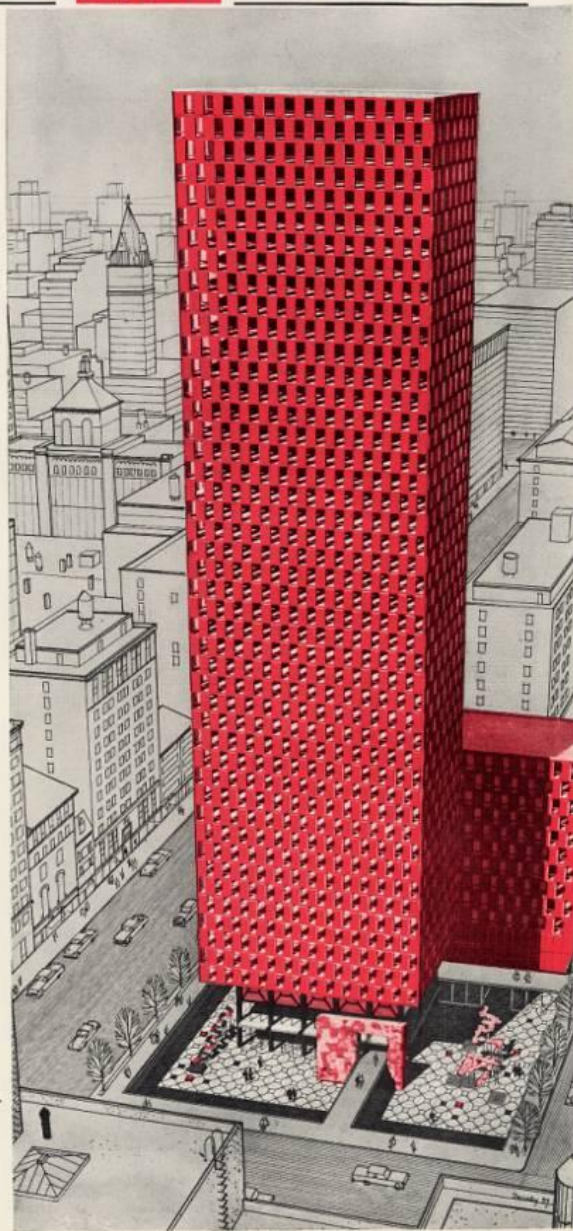


Figure 24. Proposed skyscraper replacement for Carnegie Hall, 1957.

Carnegie Hall, it was in Simon's best financial interest to sell Carnegie Hall regardless of the new architecture planned for the site.

A welcome turn of events for preservationists came in July of 1958, when Louis Glickman's bid to purchase Carnegie Hall fell through.<sup>126</sup> Even without a potential buyer, Simon showed no intention of changing his plan to sell the Hall and the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall was no closer to preventing its sale.<sup>127</sup> By 1959, Totten's fundraising effort had lost any remaining momentum; the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall had not solicited or received any funds within the previous year.<sup>128</sup> Despite initial public enthusiasm, four years of fundraising attempts had been in vain; Totten's endeavor to save Carnegie Hall was unsuccessful.

A few additional efforts to protect Carnegie Hall emerged in 1958 and 1959 but none created a viable plan for preventing demolition.<sup>129</sup> Simon remained sympathetic to

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<sup>126</sup> While Glickman officially stated that he chose not to follow through with the sale out of concern for the displaced Philharmonic, which would not be able to move to Lincoln Center until Philharmonic Hall was completed, it seems more likely that he was unable to make payments on the property. See Harold C. Schonberg, "Longer Life Won by Carnegie Hall," *New York Times*, July 4, 1958; "False 'Long Hair' Trips Realty Man's Fast Step," September 1958; "Glickman Drops Carnegie Hall Skyscraper," August 1958.

<sup>127</sup> Upon notifying Carnegie Hall Corporation stockholders that the deal with Glickman had fallen through due to a failure to make payments, Simon stated that he would continue to explore other possibilities for sale of the property since he understood that to be the desire of the stockholders. Robert E. Simon Jr., "Robert E. Simon Jr. to Stockholders of Carnegie Hall, Inc.," July 1, 1958.

<sup>128</sup> John Totten, "John Totten to Jerome O. Glucksman," February 17, 1959, Joseph Taubman Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives. In April 1958 Constance Hope had informed the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall that they should consider themselves "at an impasse" unless Simon or Glickman was willing to underwrite additional fundraising solutions. Constance Hope, "Constance Hope to John Totten," April 2, 1958, Joseph Taubman Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives

<sup>129</sup> Richard Schulze formed a group of 50 tenants of Carnegie Hall and organized a short-lived fundraising campaign. Schulze's ideas for preventing demolition included making an international appeal for funds, working jointly with a real estate outfit to purchase the Hall and run it for profit, or court action to delay demolition. John Molleson, "Bids Residents Buy Carnegie Hall," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 17, 1959; "Carnegie Hall Razing Fought," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 18, 1957; In early 1960, the World

“Save Carnegie Hall” efforts but ultimately felt that his duty to represent the Hall’s stockholders compelled him to continue searching for a buyer. New Yorkers who supported Carnegie Hall did not need to convince Simon that the building had value to the community and nation; Simon was well aware of the role that Carnegie Hall played in the history of New York City.<sup>130</sup> Because Simon pursued sale of the Hall for purely economic reasons, Totten and his committee needed an appropriate financial solution, something they never provided. Conventional means of fundraising and increasing public awareness proved ineffective against the challenge of protecting a politically-charged, for-profit operation in Midtown Manhattan. Totten could not have predicted the obstacles that would hinder fundraising efforts, yet in the face of Lincoln Center’s construction and public apathy towards architectural demolition, fundraising \$5 million dollars from the general public proved unrealistic. With no practical means of both assuaging the stockholders and preventing the property’s sale, Simon scheduled Carnegie Hall’s doors to close on May 15, 1960, and set its demolition date for that month.<sup>131</sup>

### **Isaac Stern’s Preservation Campaign**

Although Totten’s fundraising plan had lost momentum and no other preservation attempts had gained traction, the announcement of a May 1960 demolition date spurred

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Brotherhood Foundation pursued the even less promising option of appealing to Premier Khrushchev to save Carnegie Hall. “Maybe Mr. Khrushchev Can Save Carnegie Hall,” January 27, 1960.

<sup>130</sup> Cron and Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, 5.

<sup>131</sup> Raymond Rubinow, “Raymond Rubinow to Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall,” March 30, 1960, Isaac Stern Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives; “‘Save Carnegie Hall’ Prospects Brighten,” *New York Post*, March 31, 1960.

famed violinist Isaac Stern to action. “I got mad at the idea of tearing it down,” Stern recalled, “after all, Carnegie Hall identifies America with the rest of the world. It would have been like tearing down La Scala and putting up a garage.”<sup>132</sup> Stern’s strong personal attachment to Carnegie Hall began in 1943 when his first performance there proved a crucial moment in launching his musical career; he performed at Carnegie Hall a total of fifty-one times before 1960.<sup>133</sup> Stern would build his preservation campaign around both sentimental and practical motives for saving the Hall, recalling the countless musicians who had graced its stage and expressing how thoughtless it would be to deprive New York City’s young musicians of an optimal practice and performance space.<sup>134</sup> Stern’s success lay in his ability to transform these motivations into a practical economic plan for protecting the Hall, rather than relying on the impact of public sentiment.

Stern initially voiced his concern for Carnegie Hall’s fate in the winter of 1959. At this point time was short and it seemed inevitable that Carnegie Hall would be demolished. Scheduled to embark on a two month international concert tour, Stern feared that Carnegie Hall would be torn down by the time he returned to the country.<sup>135</sup> In his autobiography, Stern admits that he initially had no idea how to protect the building and although his friends and colleagues expressed sympathy for Carnegie Hall’s plight, no

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<sup>132</sup> “The Galloping Virtuoso,” *Newsweek*, April 11, 1960, Isaac Stern Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives.

<sup>133</sup> Schickel, *The World of Carnegie Hall*, 336; Isaac Stern and Chaim Potok, *My First 79 Years* (Da Capo Press, 2000), 140.

<sup>134</sup> Allan Kozinn, “Isaac Stern, Master Violinist Who Led Effort to Save Carnegie Hall, Dies at 81,” *New York Times*, September 24, 2001.

<sup>135</sup> Rebecca Read Shanor, *The City That Never Was: Two Hundred Years of Fantastic and Fascinating Plans That Might Have Changed the Face of New York City* (New York, N.Y: Viking, 1988), 79.

one knew what to do.<sup>136</sup> Connected to some of New York City's most influential residents, Stern took his passion for saving Carnegie Hall to Jacob Kaplan, a financially successful business man and philanthropist, in December of 1959.<sup>137</sup> Jacob Kaplan and his business partner Frederick Richmond, an investment banker, both showed interest in Stern's desire to prevent Carnegie Hall's demolition; Kaplan pledged \$100,000 towards preservation of the Hall and tasked Raymond Rubinow and Jack de Simone with handling the practicalities of the campaign. Rubinow served as administrator of the J.N. Kaplan fund and de Simone worked as director of Richmond's philanthropic activity.<sup>138</sup>

On January 10, 1960, Isaac Stern, Raymond Rubinow, Jack de Simone and Claire Felt, held an informal meeting and concluded that Carnegie Hall must be saved.<sup>139</sup> A second meeting, held on February 7, 1960, led to the formal creation of the new Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall, directed primarily by Stern and Rubinow.<sup>140</sup> While the group unanimously agreed that Carnegie Hall ought to be saved, they were less certain about how to accomplish this goal. From the very beginning of his preservation effort, Stern sensed that a campaign of protests and public fundraising was not likely to succeed. He believed that a political solution was their best option: "We had to convince the city

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<sup>136</sup> Isaac Stern and Chaim Potok, *My First 79 Years* (Da Capo Press, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> Rubinow, "Raymond Rubinow to Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall"; Stern and Potok, *My First 79 Years*, 142.

<sup>138</sup> Cron and Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, 3-4; Stern, *New York 1960*, 1113; Shanor, *The City That Never Was*, 79.

<sup>139</sup> Cron and Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, 3.

<sup>140</sup> Stern and Potok, *My First 79 Years*, 144; Schickel and Walsh, *Carnegie Hall, the First One Hundred Years*, 179.

and its politicians that Carnegie Hall was necessary, viable, central to the cultural life of New York.”<sup>141</sup> Indeed, too little time remained to solicit funds from the public before the May demolition date. Rubinow knew that most of the individuals and foundations who could be approached about contributing financially had already committed to Lincoln Center and, as a result, he recommended that the committee pursue government intervention. Stern’s desire to take a unique approach to Carnegie Hall’s preservation proved vital to his campaign’s success. Stern acknowledged what Totten did not: that the challenges facing Carnegie Hall’s preservationists would be best solved by political involvement. Indeed, Totten had essentially been preaching to the choir; Carnegie Hall’s attendees already knew how and why they valued the building, yet this constituency did not have the resources to raise \$5 million dollars. With New York City’s philanthropists committed to Lincoln Center, Stern’s committee realized that the most realistic solution would be to take advantage of government resources.

Forced to decide whether state or federal involvement would be best suited to the task, Stern’s committee deemed federal action too slow an option since only three months remained before the Hall’s demolition date. Alternatively, the committee chose to approach State Senator MacNeil Mitchell, whose district included Carnegie Hall, about introducing a bill that would permit the City of New York to purchase the building. MacNeil was sympathetic to the preservation agenda having been instrumental in passing the Bard Act of 1956.<sup>142</sup> Presuming MacNeil’s legislation could be passed,

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<sup>141</sup> Stern and Potok, *My First 79 Years*, 143.

<sup>142</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 141.

preservationists contemplated where the city could find funds to purchase the property. It seemed unlikely that the city government would approve \$5 million of taxpayer money for such an expenditure yet raising funds through a public subscription campaign would likely take over a year. Knowing that the Board of Estimate would likely cooperate if presented with a practical proposal, the committee chose to recommend the issuance of self-liquidating bonds.<sup>143</sup> With this in mind, Rubinow finalized a plan in which, following passage of necessary state legislation, “the City would move to acquire Carnegie Hall property, and lease it on a self-liquidating basis over a period of 25 to 30 years to a non-profit corporation to be especially formed to take responsibility for the management of Carnegie Hall.”<sup>144</sup>

The Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall moved forward with this plan even though direct government intervention in historic preservation had never been previously attempted in New York. Although twentieth century legislation granted the Federal government permission to acquire property for urban renewal projects, it had no ability to intervene in a case such as Carnegie Hall’s where slum redevelopment was not at stake.<sup>145</sup> Nineteenth century preservation had been solely a private endeavor. The Federal government entered preservation in the 1930s when they instituted the Historic Building Survey in which the National Park Service hired historians and architects to survey, record, and interpret historic buildings in the United States. Although passage of the Historic Sites Act in 1935 increased the ability of the National Park Service to preserve

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<sup>143</sup> Stern and Potok, *My First 79 Years*, 148.

<sup>144</sup> Raymond Rubinow, “Ray Rubinow to Julius Bloom,” May 24, 1962, Folder 37, Isaac Stern Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives.

private property, conduct surveys, and establish educational programs, it did not permit the Park Service to acquire threatened buildings through eminent domain or to stand in the way of other New Deal development such as urban renewal and transportation construction.<sup>146</sup> World War II prevented this legislation from achieving its full potential but many local communities across the country had already begun to implement their own preservation laws.<sup>147</sup> New York, however, did not grant local governments similar architectural control until passage of the Bard Act in 1956. Bard's concern was primarily aesthetic, however, rather than historical. The Bard Act allowed New York cities to implement their own legislation governing architectural aesthetics but did not address how local government would protect an architecturally derided building such as Carnegie Hall.<sup>148</sup>

As a result, non-profit acquisition of Carnegie Hall required the passage of two bills through the State Legislature: one that allowed the City of New York to purchase the Hall, and another that would create the Carnegie Hall Corporation as a non-profit organization to own and operate the site for cultural purposes.<sup>149</sup> Senator MacNeil Mitchell introduced the first bill, an amendment to the Bard Act of 1956, which permitted the City of New York to acquire, "by purchase, gift, devise, lease, condemnation, or

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<sup>146</sup> Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*, Critical Perspectives on the Past (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 185; Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, 55.

<sup>147</sup> Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, 59.

<sup>148</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 30 Also see Chapter 1 of this thesis for further discussion of the Bard Act.

<sup>149</sup> "2d Bill to Save Carnegie Hall Voted, Governor May Sign Both Measures," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 1, 1960; "City Votes Action on Carnegie Hall," *New York Times*, April 29, 1960; Wood, *Preserving New York*, 254.

otherwise,” any property having “special historical or esthetic interest or value.” The city could then relinquish the property, by lease or sale, to a non-profit group that would “preserve, perpetuate, or enhance its value or use.”<sup>150</sup> This bill, although created specifically to facilitate the purchase of Carnegie Hall, also carried broader implications; it would allow future state-lead preservation in other cities throughout New York on the basis of either historic or aesthetic value. The second bill, drafted by Harold Reigelman, authorized the City of New York to issue bonds for the purchase and renovation of the Hall as well as to create the nonprofit Carnegie Hall Corporation.<sup>151</sup> The building could then be leased to the Carnegie Hall Corporation and the bonds amortized from rentals. In the case of Carnegie Hall, the transaction was intended to be self-liquidating and at the end of thirty years, the Carnegie Hall Corporation would own the building.

Stern’s connections in the world of music, both in New York City and internationally, formed a solid foundation of highly visible public support and his efforts to pass the two bills were bolstered with recognizable names. Stern was asked to serve as chairman of the Artist’s Committee, a subcommittee of the Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall created to emphasize the artistic benefits of Carnegie Hall and therefore lessen the impression that efforts to preserve the Hall were politically hostile to the construction of Lincoln Center. Stern took additional steps to lessen the politically divisive nature of Carnegie Hall’s future, using his personal connections to secure the

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<sup>150</sup> Bill is quoted in “Saving of Carnegie Hall Enabled In Bills Signed by Rockefeller,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1960; Also referenced MacNeill Mitchell, *An Act to Amend the General City Law, in Relation to the Acquisition, Maintenance, Lease or Sale of Historic and Aesthetic Sites*, 1960 located in Robert E. Simon Jr. Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives.

<sup>151</sup> Cron and Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, 4.

support of the New York City's government and politicians. At Stern's request, twenty internationally renowned musicians signed a petition sent to Governor Rockefeller and Mayor Wagner, expressing their support for the preservation of Carnegie Hall. Stern's petition appealed to New York's desire to be seen as culturally relevant and attempted to negate any lingering sense of rivalry between supporters of Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall:

I affirm my belief in the importance of keeping Carnegie Hall as a permanent cultural monument. It is of historical significance in the musical development of the United States, the embodiment of our musical heritage. This is a consecrated house. It holds memories of all the great performances of all the world's great artists shared by many generations of music lovers. Leaving aside all sentimental reasons, Carnegie Hall, for the world outside the United States, has become a symbol of the greatest achievements in music. In the minds of civilized men everywhere it is the gateway to musical America. To destroy it now for "practical reasons" is an act of irresponsibility damaging to the United States and our prestige in the entire civilized world.<sup>152</sup>

In his statement, Stern acknowledged the importance of Carnegie Hall as a repository of memories and a beacon of the United States' cultural significance. These statements echoed the words of Carnegie Hall's earlier preservationists, yet Stern amplified the power of these sentiments by ascribing them to internationally renowned musicians and appending them to a practical monetary solution.

Stern relentlessly pursued political endorsement of his effort to save Carnegie Hall. On March 11, Stern sent Mayor Wagner a telegram in which he argued that any great city should have more than one concert hall, stressed Carnegie Hall's acoustic perfection, and promoted the benefits of a non-profit concert hall for New York's

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<sup>152</sup> Stern and Potok, *My First 79 Years*, 147.

aspiring musicians.<sup>153</sup> In late March, the Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall met with the mayor to present their case for saving the building and acquired his verbal support for preserving Carnegie Hall.<sup>154</sup> Because only three days remained in the current session of the state senate it seemed unlikely the bills would be brought to a vote. Undeterred, members of Stern's committee continued to lobby their state representatives and surprisingly the bills were quickly voted on and passed.

Despite the progress made by Stern and his committee, Robert E. Simon Jr. remained skeptical that their plans would come to fruition. Simon distributed eviction notices to Carnegie Hall's tenants, dated March 31, 1960, and demolition crews began painting white "x's" across the building's windows.<sup>155</sup> On April 16, 1960, Governor Rockefeller signed both bills into law and Carnegie Hall's preservation seemed possible at last.<sup>156</sup> Stern immediately issued a statement in which he expressed delight that Rockefeller had signed the bill and encouraged the mayor and Board of Estimate to expedite the preservation process.<sup>157</sup>

Once New York's state government adopted the necessary legislation, the decision to purchase Carnegie Hall rested with the New York City Board of Estimate. Once again, Stern's personal connections proved vital to Carnegie Hall's preservation. In

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>154</sup> "New Unit Formed to Save Carnegie Hall," *New York Times*, March 31, 1960.

<sup>155</sup> Cron and Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, 5.

<sup>156</sup> "Saving of Carnegie Hall Enabled In Bills Signed by Rockefeller"; Shanor, *The City That Never Was*, 79; Wood, *Preserving New York*, 254.

<sup>157</sup> Stern and Potok, *My First 79 Years*, 153.

mid-April Stern found himself seated next to Mayor Wagner at a Passover Seder and used the chance to speak to Wagner about Carnegie Hall's fate, which would soon rest in the hands of the city government. A musician in his youth, Wagner reminisced about the Hall and pledged his continued support for Stern's effort.<sup>158</sup> On April 28, the Board of Estimate held a public hearing, providing one last opportunity for citizens to voice their opinions about Carnegie Hall's impact on New York City. Harold Riegelman spoke to the Board in support of Carnegie Hall, reiterating that New York City could easily support both Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. A representative of the Commerce and Industry Association of New York, an organization dedicated to lobbying for legislation favorable to the growth of New York City's businesses, argued against the preservation of the Hall. The Commerce and Industry Association took the familiar stance that Carnegie Hall's continued presence would create "disastrous competition" and likely jeopardize the success of Lincoln Center. "Let us give the Center the chance it deserves," the Association argued, "and not start it off under the handicap of competition from Carnegie, and let us use the site on which Carnegie now stands for the productive purposes for which it is best suited."<sup>159</sup> The Board of Estimate sided with Carnegie Hall's supporters and on April 28, 1960, following the public hearing, the Board unanimously voted to authorize the purchase of Carnegie Hall.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>159</sup> "City Votes Action on Carnegie Hall"; Arnold Witte, "Statement of Commerce and Industry Association of New York, Inc. in Opposition to Acquisition by the City of Carnegie Hall and Adjoining Premises," April 28, 1960, Robert E. Simon Jr. Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives.

<sup>160</sup> "Board of Estimate Votes Carnegie Hall Purchase," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 11, 1960.

After negotiations with Simon, on June 30, the City of New York officially bought the title to Carnegie Hall for a purchase price of \$5 million and immediately rented the building to the non-profit Carnegie Hall Corporation. Simon lowered his proposed purchase price by \$250,000 as a personal contribution.<sup>161</sup> With Carnegie Hall's future ensured, the building's interior space was renovated and on September 25 the venue held a preview performance by the New York Philharmonic featuring a solo by Isaac Stern. The following day Mayor Wager officially reopened the Hall with a ribbon cutting ceremony.<sup>162</sup> What Totten and others had spent five years trying to accomplish, Stern successfully achieved in a few months. In honor of his work, the Municipal Art Society thanked Stern: "Although experts failed and all the wisest found no way, ISAAC STERN, heeding the poet's plea - 'sweet sounds, oh, beautiful music, do not cease!' - at last succeeded. To him, to his clear vision and persistence, we owe the preservation of a heritage, Carnegie Hall."<sup>163</sup>

From its inception, Stern's committee possessed a level of prestige and influence that Totten's committee lacked. Whereas the Committee to Save Carnegie Hall was largely composed of musicians and Carnegie Hall employees, Stern assembled a team of highly influential New Yorkers with leverage in local government and experience in public relations. As a whole, this committee may have had less personal investment in the

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<sup>161</sup> Gino Francesconi, "Celebrating the 100th Birthday of Robert Simon Jr.," April 10, 2014, <http://www.carnegiehall.org/BlogPost.aspx?id=4295005048>.

<sup>162</sup> Bruce Sloan, "Carnegie Hall Begins New Life of Splendor," *New York World-Telegram and Sun*, September 1960, Isaac Stern Collection, Carnegie Hall Archives; Cron and Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, 6.

<sup>163</sup> Cron and Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, 6.

Hall but it was more capable of inciting action and was familiar with political means of realizing Stern's goals. Theodore Cron states that Stern's committee "deserves a second glance, for it is almost a case-study example of a community group formed to move the local 'power structure.'"<sup>164</sup> Indeed, the Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall grew to include influential figures such as Isaac Stern's wife, Vera Stern; lawyer Colonel Harold Reigelman; Bob Dowling, a New York banker; and John Barry Ryan, a well-known New York investor.<sup>165</sup> Creating new state legislation and ensuring the cooperation of the City of New York was a challenge that required both Republican and Democrat cooperation in an election year, and Stern's committee benefitted from its connections with the mayor and other key members of the city government.<sup>166</sup> Stern himself was an internationally admired figure and his committee contained a number of members willing to lobby the Republican state legislature and the Democratic city government to help pass both bills.<sup>167</sup> This committee recognized the political implications of Carnegie Hall's preservation and used that to their advantage, rather than focusing on an appeal to the public. Emphasizing the ways in which Carnegie Hall contributed to the city's cultural image, rather than appealing to sentiment, they confronted the notion that Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center could not co-exist. Consciously striving not to discredit the importance of Lincoln Center, which was built on an urban renewal site and funded

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>165</sup> Stern and Potok, *My First 79 Years*, 144.

<sup>166</sup> Cron and Goldblatt, *Portrait of Carnegie Hall*, 146. Both Senator Mitchell and Governor Rockefeller were Republican whereas Mayor Wagner was a Democrat.

<sup>167</sup> Stern and Potok, *My First 79 Years*, 146.

primarily by Governor Rockefeller's family, Stern formed political connections that made Carnegie Hall's preservation feasible.

Stern overcame political challenges but also successfully solved Simon's economic conundrum. In order to satisfy Simon and his investors, Stern needed the continued use of Carnegie Hall to appear as valuable as the construction of a new commercial building. Stern's purpose in saving the building was largely to ensure its continued use as a functional music hall. The creation of a non-profit organization helped to ensure that the venue would remain profitable enough to continue functioning as it had for the past sixty years. The self-liquidating nature of the city's purchase and lease of the property increased the appeal of saving Carnegie Hall as it would be neither a financial burden on the city, nor a money-losing sale for Simon and his investors. Stern understood not only the political, but also the economic factors that needed to be addressed if an attempt to preserve Carnegie Hall were to succeed.

Isaac Stern's innovative approach to preservation was effective, yet years would pass before the concept of government intervention as a means of preserving architecture reached its full potential. Changes to New York City's architectural culture escalated at the end of the 1950s. As a result, the concept of seeking government involvement in preservation quickly became a potential solution for other threatened buildings and neighborhoods. A number of attempts to instigate similar legislation arose in the years following Carnegie Hall's successful preservation but none would achieve success so quickly. In 1961, residents of Brooklyn Heights set out to protect their neighborhood. Having catalogued and identified the architectural significance of each building, residents

sought the creation of a protective zoning amendment. The local government refused to consider Brooklyn Heights residents' request, however, citing fear that by granting the zoning amendment, they would be setting an unwanted precedent. Rather than approach preservation requests as individual cases and promote what they believed would be logistical chaos, the local government refused to act until New York City instituted comprehensive preservation legislation. Brooklyn Heights was assured first priority when such legislation took effect, but received no government assistance while they waited. Such comprehensive legislation would not be implemented until 1965.

Meanwhile, in the late 1950s, concerned citizens also initiated an effort to preserve Jefferson Market Courthouse in Greenwich Village. The Venetian Gothic style of the structure had earned it a reputation in 1885 as the fifth most beautiful building in the United States, but by the mid-1950s its revival style was no longer unanimously praised and it ceased to serve as a courthouse in 1945 (Fig. 25). In 1959, rumors that the abandoned building would be sold inspired preservation efforts lead by Margot Gayle, whose work would be rewarded a number of years later when the building was repurposed as a branch of the New York Public Library.<sup>168</sup> The preservation of Jefferson Market Courthouse would be a “rare early preservation victory” made possible “through intense and well-organized community pressure,” one of few that occurred before the passage of the Landmarks Preservation Law in 1965.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1131–1132; “Our Vanishing Legacy” (New York, NY: WCBS-TV, September 21, 1961).

<sup>169</sup> Gratz, *The Battle for Gotham*, 49.

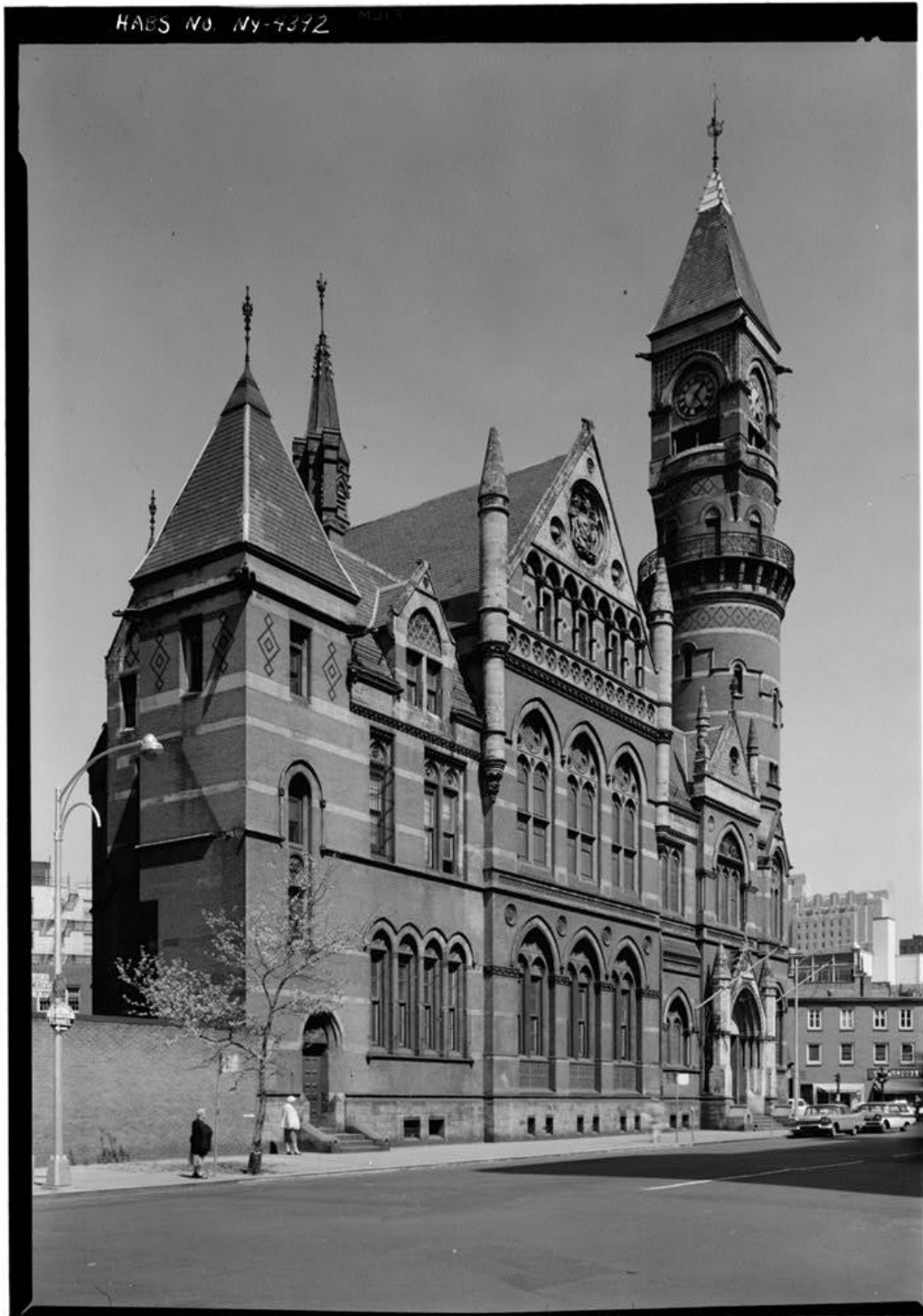


Figure 25. Jefferson Market Courthouse (previously Third Judicial District Courthouse), view from southeast, New York, NY, 1960.

A threat to Grand Central Station in 1954 had incited a more widespread reaction (Fig.26).<sup>170</sup> Plans to demolish the station caused an outcry from New York City's architects and is said to be the impetus for Albert Bard's first draft of his preservation legislation. Although discussions of replacing the terminal would continue for decades, the initial attempt to replace the terminal occurred in 1954 when New York Central announced two proposals for the future of the site.<sup>171</sup> Even when it became clear that the building would not be torn down, preservation advocates still voiced concern about the tasteless modernization efforts taking place inside, which effectively negated the aesthetic value of the building (Fig. 27).<sup>172</sup> A stream of proposed plans without any implementation allowed the building to remain standing until it could be protected by the 1965 Landmarks Preservation Law.

City purchase of Carnegie Hall had created a new means of preservation and signified a new era of discontentment with architectural demolition. Despite the fast moving success of Carnegie Hall's preservation, New York City would move slowly in acting on these new concepts of government intervention. As demonstrated by the case of Carnegie Hall, preservation decisions could become complex battles of conflicting interests. At the end of the 1950s a growing number of preservation advocates attempted to challenge public apathy and demonstrate the need for a useful law that could dependably protect their heritage. In 1961, New York City's local CBS television station

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<sup>170</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 138.

<sup>171</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1139.

<sup>172</sup> "Our Vanishing Legacy."



Figure 26. Grand Central Terminal, New York, NY, 1943.



Figure 27. Interior of Grand Central Terminal, New York, NY, 1960.

broadcast a documentary entitled “Our Vanishing Legacy.” Beginning with the preservation of Carnegie Hall, host Ned Calmer recounted New York City’s recent architectural battles. As well as decrying modernization within Grand Central Terminal, the loss of LaGrange Terrace’s marble residences, and the uncertain fate of Jefferson Market Courthouse, Calmer drew the attention of New Yorkers to Pennsylvania Station. This building, Calmer predicted, would likely “give way to the low ceilings and florescent lights and the thing we call efficiency.”<sup>173</sup> Although both were threatened by New York City’s insatiable desire for efficiency, Carnegie Hall and Pennsylvania Station experienced entirely different fates. As New Yorkers spent the late 1950s and early 1960s formulating a new movement to protect their architectural heritage, the final questions of “Our Vanishing Legacy” continued to resound: “Should there be a law to protect our unique buildings in New York? To preserve the best of our architectural tradition? To save our vanishing legacy? Maybe there should be.”<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

### **Chapter 3: A Study in Opposing Preservation Outcomes**

In July 1966, Ada Louise Huxtable, architecture critic for the *New York Times*, provided this eulogy for Pennsylvania Station:

Pennsylvania Station succumbed to progress this week at the age of 56, after a lingering decline. The building's one remaining facade was shorn of eagles and ornament yesterday, preparatory to leveling the last wall. It went not with a bang, or a whimper, but to the rustle of real estate stock shares.<sup>175</sup>

At the start of Penn Station's three-year-long demolition, she had famously decreed that, "Any city gets what it admires, will pay for, and ultimately deserves...and we will probably be judged not by the monuments we built but by those we have destroyed."<sup>176</sup> Fulfilling Huxtable's prediction, Penn Station's demise persists in public consciousness as the critical event that sparked the beginning of the modern historic preservation movement in New York City.<sup>177</sup>

In seeking to establish a more nuanced understanding of historic preservation, a number of recent scholars have chosen to de-emphasize the demolition of Pennsylvania Station as the movement's originary moment and focus instead on the precedent set by late-nineteenth century preservation.<sup>178</sup> These scholars believe the narrative of Penn

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<sup>175</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "A Vision of Rome Dies," *New York Times*, July 14, 1966.

<sup>176</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "Farewell to Penn Station," *New York Times*, October 30, 1963.

<sup>177</sup> Lorraine B. Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station* (New York: American Heritage, 1985), 8; Eric J. Plosky, "The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station" (master's thesis, MIT, 1999), 2; Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, 14; Stern, *New York 1900*, 1091.

<sup>178</sup> See works by Max Page and Randall Mason for scholarship on American historic preservation with a focus on nineteenth and early-twentieth century activity. Max Page and Randall Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States* (New York: Routledge,

Station's demolition has created an overly simplistic understanding of historic preservation and given undue credit to postwar events at the expense of prior accomplishments. In *Giving Preservation a History*, Max Page and Randall Mason introduce the book's discussion of early-twentieth century preservation as a means of complicating the "myth" that Penn Station's demolition can be characterized as a battle of good versus evil. As they note, such an approach reduces the conflict between postwar preservationists and the cultural, economic, and aesthetic challenges they faced to generalities.<sup>179</sup>

This chapter seeks to complicate, rather than discount, the narrative of Penn Station's demolition. In this discussion of postwar historic preservation the destruction of Penn Station provides an informative foil to the successful preservation of Carnegie Hall. In both cases, New York City residents reacted negatively to a cultural preoccupation with economic efficiency and voiced concerns about the long-term consequences of mindless demolition. The two preservation efforts occurred only a few years apart and arose from similar motives yet produced entirely different outcomes. An examination of Penn Station's demolition will add depth to the explanation of Carnegie Hall's success by explaining how the famed architecture of Penn Station could be destroyed and Carnegie Hall's denigrated architecture protected. This chapter establishes the motives and methods of Penn Station's preservationists, framing them within the context of postwar preservation and comparing them to the events and attitudes surrounding Carnegie Hall

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2004); Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940*, Historical Studies of Urban America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>179</sup> Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, 6.

several years prior. I will argue that Penn Station's demise confirms the conclusions of the previous chapter: a recognition and subsequent sensitive handling of economic and political issues made Carnegie Hall's preservation possible, not arguments based on aesthetics or the materiality of collective memories.

These two disparate buildings also highlight the way in which New York City's attitude towards historic preservation transformed from its nineteenth and early-twentieth century form to a new postwar manifestation that necessitated innovative methodology. Carnegie Hall's preservation suggests that because of the priority placed on economics in urban development, private philanthropy alone could no longer continue to adequately support preservation goals. The destruction of Penn Station built upon Carnegie Hall's precedent and further encouraged city-wide legislation to protect existing architecture.

### **Pennsylvania Station's Postwar Expendability**

The story of Carnegie Hall's construction began with the desire for a permanent, cultural landmark in New York City. Pennsylvania Station, on the other hand, was designed as a monument to modern mobility. New York City enthusiastically greeted the construction of Pennsylvania Station in 1910 at the high point of transcontinental rail travel in the United States. At this moment rail lines and train stations represented the pinnacle of American technological advancement. They confirmed the status of early twentieth-century America as a country of innovation and prosperity. Unfortunately no one could foresee that the Pennsylvania Railroad would never again enjoy this level of profitability and prestige. The Railroad suffered a variety of losses over the next five

decades, often rebounding impressively but never fully recovering. World War I significantly reduced available funds for the station's upkeep and the Great Depression further weakened the company's financial stability.<sup>180</sup> By the 1950s, new means of travel reduced the role of long-distance train service in the United States and threatened the viability of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

American transportation habits transformed when the end of World War II encouraged rapid suburbanization of major metropolitan areas. Stimulated by the Housing Act of 1949, residential construction strove to meet the housing demand of returning veterans and their families.<sup>181</sup> The appeal of this new suburban lifestyle increased New York City's need for expanded commuter transportation, a service Pennsylvania Station's transnational rail lines did not provide. From 1950 to 1970, New York's suburbs doubled in size; highways systems and commuter rail lines grew to accommodate the needs of these new commuters.<sup>182</sup> Long distance travel transformed as well. The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 and the war's economization of air travel reduced the demand for transnational rail lines.<sup>183</sup> Trains were no longer the most practical, comfortable, and prestigious way to venture across the country. Displaced as the most technologically advanced form of transportation, railroads became nostalgic

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<sup>180</sup> Lorraine B. Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station* (New York: American Heritage, 1985), 125; Eric J. Plosky, "The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station", 19.

<sup>181</sup> Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 197.

<sup>182</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson and David S. Dunbar, eds., *Empire City: New York through the Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 686; Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles*, 173.

<sup>183</sup> Jackson and Dunbar, *Empire City*, 686.

remnants of an earlier era. As Americans adopted novel forms of transportation the Pennsylvania Railroad suffered crippling financial losses and by 1951 they had accumulated a \$72 million deficit.<sup>184</sup>

New York City's postwar promotion of urban development compounded the financial difficulties the Pennsylvania Railroad faced due to the decreasing popularity of rail travel. The prosperity that exponentially increased Carnegie Hall's land value also threatened Pennsylvania Station. As discussed in Chapter 2, real estate investors in the 1950s and 1960s sought to replace existing low-rise structures with new high-rise buildings that could increase revenue. Charles McKim's monumental Beaux-Arts Station was imposing and impressive, but neither economically nor functionally efficient.<sup>185</sup> No more than the equivalent of four stories in height, Penn Station seemed a poor use of a valuable site.<sup>186</sup> In 1902 Pennsylvania Railroad President Alexander Cassatt had commissioned famed architecture firm McKim, Mead, and White to create Pennsylvania Station as a representation of American technological progress and the spirit of New York City.<sup>187</sup> Reflecting the United State's turn-of-the-century fascination with the City Beautiful Movement, McKim designed an imposing pink granite Beaux-Arts waiting

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<sup>184</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1114.

<sup>185</sup>In terms of functional efficiency, Lewis Mumford provided a detailed description of Pennsylvania Station's floorplan and how it affected the traveler. He believed that the station's open spaces were ideal for large crowds but that its many levels were unfortunately confusing. Lewis Mumford, "The Pennsylvania Station Nightmare," in *The Highway and the City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, 1963); Phaidon Press, ed., *Lost Masterpieces*, Architecture 3s (London: Phaidon, 1999); Constance M. Greiff, *Lost America: From the Atlantic to the Mississippi*, 1st ed. (Princeton, N.J: Pyne Press, 1971), 167.

<sup>186</sup> Peter Moore et al., *The Destruction of Penn Station: Photographs by Peter Moore* (New York, NY: D.A.P., 2000), 17; Plosky, "The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station," 20.

<sup>187</sup> Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station*, 16.

area, inspired by the Baths of Caracalla in Rome (Fig. 28), behind which a glass-and-steel train concourse resided (Fig. 29).<sup>188</sup> The extravagant station spanned two city blocks and covered nine acres of land; the tremendous size of its general waiting area frequently inspired comparisons to the nave of St. Peter's in Rome.<sup>189</sup> Thirty-five-foot-tall Doric columns lined the Station's exterior and Jules Guerin murals decorated the interior (Fig.30).<sup>190</sup> In postwar New York City, however, where developers conveyed progress through sleek, International Style high-rise buildings, Penn Station's revival aesthetic began to represent the company's own obsolescence.

Upkeep of such a massive station took a toll on the already financially troubled Pennsylvania Railroad.<sup>191</sup> Because the railroad only ran electric trains, which could easily be operated entirely underground, postwar investors viewed McKim's building as an unnecessary expense.<sup>192</sup> From 1955 onward the Pennsylvania Railroad sought a developer for Penn Station's site. It is not entirely clear whether the Railroad sought to sell their station due to the deteriorating condition of the building or because they recognized an opportunity to capitalize on valuable property. Amid accusations that they were allowing Penn Station to deteriorate as an excuse for tearing it down, the

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<sup>188</sup> Moore et al., *The Destruction of Penn Station*, 17.

<sup>189</sup> Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station*, 16; Wood, *Preserving New York*, 295.

<sup>190</sup> Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station*, 16; Moore et al., *The Destruction of Penn Station*, 17.

<sup>191</sup> Robert E. Bedingfield, "Pennsy Expects Only a Fair Year," *New York Times*, May 11, 1960. The Pennsylvania Railroad states the expensive nature of building repairs as their reason for seeking to replace Pennsylvania Station.

<sup>192</sup> Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station*, 25.



Figure 28. Bird's-eye view of Pennsylvania Station, New York, NY, ca. 1910.



Figure 29. Interior of Pennsylvania Station, New York, NY, 1945.



Figure 30. Main waiting room, Pennsylvania Station, ca. 1911.

Pennsylvania Railroad increasingly neglected building maintenance after 1955.<sup>193</sup> Penn Station's pink granite facade turned a grimy grey, dirt darkened the interior murals beyond recognition, soot caked the once transparent glass roof of the train concourse, and modern billboards marred the neoclassical architecture.<sup>194</sup> In a 1958 article for the *New Yorker*, critic Lewis Mumford described his indignation with Penn Station's disrepair: "No one now entering Pennsylvania Station for the first time could, without clairvoyance, imagine how good it used to be, in comparison to the almost indescribable botch that has been made of it."<sup>195</sup> These disheartening signs of neglect would hinder attempts to justify the building's aesthetic worth when it faced demolition several years later.

### **Protests and Preservation Attempts**

On July 21, 1960, after attempting for a decade to rid itself of the monumental granite and marble station, the Pennsylvania Railroad announced plans for a new Madison Square Garden complex on Penn Station's site.<sup>196</sup> To replace Pennsylvania Station, Charles Luckman and Associates designed a new complex that included a thirty-four story commercial building, a 25,000 seat primary arena, a 4,000 seat auxiliary arena

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 144; Phaidon Press, *Lost Masterpieces*.

<sup>194</sup> Richard J. Whalen, *A City Destroying Itself: An Angry View of New York* (New York: Morrow, 1965), 63; Moore et al., *The Destruction of Penn Station*, 21; Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station*, 25.

<sup>195</sup> Mumford, "The Pennsylvania Station Nightmare."

<sup>196</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*, 1115.

with rooftop ice rink, and a twenty-eight story hotel (Fig. 31).<sup>197</sup> The construction of Madison Square Garden promised to alleviate the Pennsylvania Railroad's financial difficulties.<sup>198</sup> In exchange for the site's air rights, the Railroad would receive 25 percent of Madison Square Garden Center, Inc. stock and a new, smaller facility located entirely below ground (Fig. 32).<sup>199</sup> Newspaper accounts emphasized the benefits of the new Madison Square Garden and avoided mentioning the demolition of the existing station. Focusing on Pennsylvania Station's function, rather than its iconic architecture, the press "treated the station as though it consisted only of the below-grade railroad tracks and platforms and ignored the presence of the Charles Follen McKim's classical giant that housed it all."<sup>200</sup>

The Pennsylvania Railroad's economic justification for seeking to sell the site and demolish Pennsylvania Station was challenged by a variety of ideological concerns. Discontent with modern architectural designs and frustration with current urban planning philosophies prompted a desire to protect Pennsylvania Station. Those who raised such concerns, however, were in the minority. The announcement of Pennsylvania Station's impending destruction did not generate a significant public outcry; an energetic response

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<sup>197</sup> "Penn Station to Give Way to Madison Square Garden; Great Space in Peril; RR to Go Underground," *Progressive Architecture* 42 (September 1961): 65.

<sup>198</sup> Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station*, 144; Bedingfield, "Pennsy Expects Only a Fair Year."

<sup>199</sup> Foster Hailey, "'62 Start Is Set for New Garden," *New York Times*, July 27, 1961. Newspaper articles from the time speak of the Pennsylvania Railroad desiring to sell the site's "air rights." The current legal understanding of air rights, in which "unused" air space above a building can be sold to adjacent property was not developed until New York City's implementation of new zoning legislation in 1961. In this case, therefore, what the Pennsylvania Railroad sought to sell Madison Square Garden was the ability to build above ground on the site.

<sup>200</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 277.

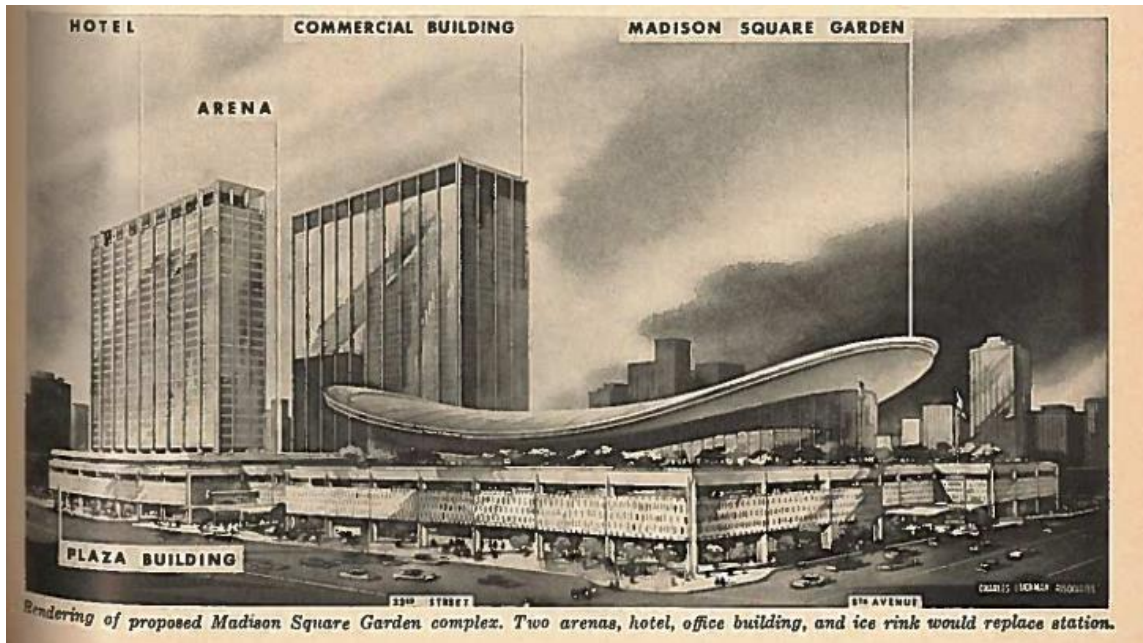


Figure 31. Rendering of proposed Madison Square Garden Complex, 1962.

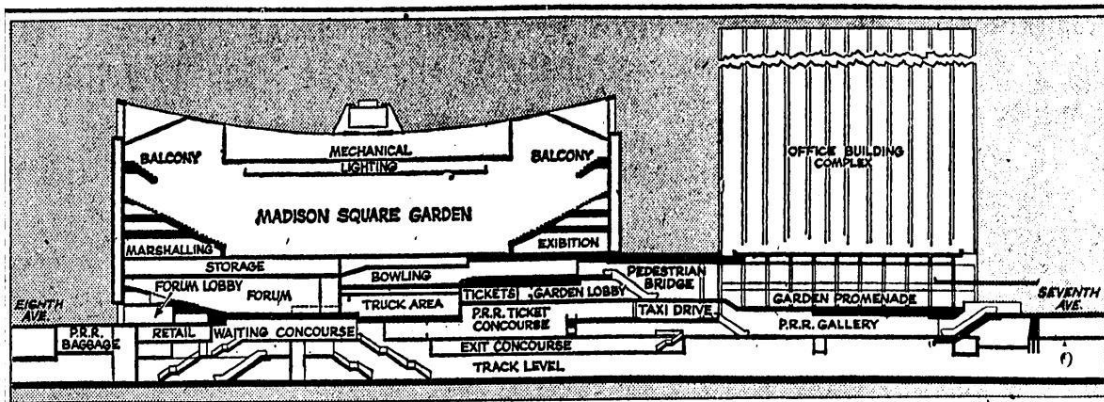


Figure 32. Section view of Proposed Madison Square Garden Complex, 1963.

emerged but was limited to a niche group of New Yorkers. Attempts to preserve the station attracted prominent architects, historians, critics, and planning professionals, as well as the support of the *New York Times* and a number of architectural magazines, but failed to overcome public apathy or win government endorsement. Scholars have suggested a number of explanations for the lack of vocal public outcry against Pennsylvania Station's demolition: disbelief that developers would actually tear down such a monumental building, particularly since an earlier threat to Grand Central Terminal never materialized; disinterest in a building whose aesthetic appeal had been marred by lack of maintenance and unwanted modernization efforts; and characteristic postwar cultural apathy towards architectural demolition.<sup>201</sup> Additionally, unlike Carnegie Hall, Pennsylvania Station was not a building intended to engender affection. Carnegie Hall had been a permanent cultural fixture in New York City for over sixty years and had acquired international prestige by the time Robert E. Simon Jr. announced plans for the building's demolition. It was not only an orchestral venue but a place where musical and political history were made. Pennsylvania Station, however, was not a space in which one formed permanent sentimental memories. Rather it was a facility dedicated to transportation and movement; a space one passed through rather than lingered in.

Although the general public did not react passionately to the threat to Penn Station, New York City's architectural community responded by proposing possible means of architectural preservation. A variety of ideological concerns motivated these architects and critics who became preservation advocates. They considered Pennsylvania

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 278.

Station to be a worthwhile relic of the past: it represented a style of architecture that they believed modern architectural ideology had foolishly dismissed. Unlike Carnegie Hall's eclectic revivalism, many architects remained interested in Pennsylvania Station's design because, despite lack of maintenance, it exhibited a monumentality that had become increasingly rare in new construction. Charles McKim had originally conceived of the space as a "purely monumental structure, a civic gateway free from commercial influence."<sup>202</sup> In the postwar period, Pennsylvania Station's monumentality made it an object of reverence for architects who were aware that such an uninhibited design could not be duplicated in their day. Seeking to distance itself from historical precedents, early-twentieth century modern architectural ideology largely dismissed the subject of monumentality, a quality associated with the derivative Beaux-Arts and City Beautiful movements.<sup>203</sup> In the decades following World War II, however, modern architects became newly concerned with reconsidering the role of monumentality in architectural design. Participating in a 1948 symposium that attempted to define monumentality in postwar architecture, Henry-Russell Hitchcock acknowledged that "it seems to be generally agreed that modern architecture has not been successful at monumental expression."<sup>204</sup> Some architects looked to past expressions of architectural sublimity and stability with fondness. In 1952, Henry H. Reed Jr., an outspoken critic of modern architecture, used the example of Pennsylvania Station to defend the worth of past

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<sup>202</sup> Plosky, "The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station," 12.

<sup>203</sup> George G. Collins and Christiane C. Collins, "Monumentality: A Critical Matter In Modern Architecture," *The Harvard Architecture Review* 4 (1984): 14–19.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

conceptions of monumentality.<sup>205</sup> Aware that New York City's architecture was governed by a philosophy of economy and austerity, Ada Louise Huxtable mourned Pennsylvania Station's demise knowing that "we can never again afford a nine-acre structure of superbly detailed solid travertine, any more than we could build one of solid gold."<sup>206</sup> Even Lewis Mumford recognized the increasing shortage of monumental structures in New York City: "The major quality of [Grand Central Station and Pennsylvania Station], one that too few buildings in this city today possess, is space - space generally, even nobly handled... The combination of mass and volume is one of the special blessings of monumental architecture."<sup>207</sup> As postwar architects grappled with the role of monumentality in design, many recognized the rarity of Pennsylvania Station as an extravagant, nobly oversized building intended to last for centuries.

This renewed interest in Pennsylvania Station's architecture benefited from the fact that burgeoning postwar preservation ideology had begun to place an emphasis on aesthetics. Carnegie Hall's lack of architectural significance had distanced it from preservation efforts lead by architectural organizations, but the notability of Pennsylvania Station's architecture and its creation by one of New York City's most famous design firms, prompted architectural and artistic organizations to defend it. Support came from the Municipal Art Society (MAS), the Trust for Historic Preservation, the New York

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<sup>205</sup> Henry H. Reed Jr., "Monumental Architecture, Or, The Art of Pleasing in Civic Design," *Perspecta* 1 (1952): 55.

<sup>206</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "Architecture: How to Kill a City," *New York Times*, May 5, 1963, 147.

<sup>207</sup> Lewis Mumford, "Is New York Expendable?," in *From the Ground Up: Observations on Contemporary Architecture, Housing, Highway Building, and Civic Design* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, 1956), 203.

Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the Fine Arts Federation of New York.<sup>208</sup> In the *New York Times* MAS called Pennsylvania Station “one of the great monuments of classical America,” and the AIA defended the structure as “a monument of great public, historic, and architectural importance, that has served the city as a great portal to the heart of our metropolis” and whose demolition “would be an irreplaceable loss to the City of New York.”<sup>209</sup> A portion of New York’s artistic community had acknowledged Pennsylvania Station’s value even before they feared it would be demolished. The Municipal Art Society was one such organization interested in preserving New York City’s noteworthy architecture and in 1955 they added Pennsylvania Station to a catalog of buildings deemed worthy of preservation in New York City.<sup>210</sup>

This new willingness to defend aesthetics that Modern architecture had previously dismissed prompted a number of aesthetically-minded preservationists to propose saving the most artistically-valued fragments of the building. Suggestions included preserving the facade by incorporating it into the new Madison Square Garden. Parks Commissioner Newbold Morris proposed saving 84 of the Doric columns by placing them in Flushing Meadows Park, and Pratt Institute students drew up plans to place the columns in Battery

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<sup>208</sup> Plosky, “The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station,” 36.

<sup>209</sup> Martin Tolchin, “Demolition Starts at Penn Station; Architects Picket,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1963; “Frederick J. Woodbridge to Mayor Robert F. Wagner,” September 6, 1962, Box 218, Folder 9, Ada Louise Huxtable Papers, Gettys Research Institute.

<sup>210</sup> The MAS seems to have underestimated the risk of danger to Pennsylvania Station. Rather than categorize the station as a Category 1 structure, which “should be preserved at all costs,” the MAS labeled it as Category 3, “structures of importance... designated for preservation.” Mumford, “Is New York Expendable?,” 202.

Park. Neither plan was realized.<sup>211</sup> These suggestions, however, failed to appease the growing number of preservation advocates whose concerns extended beyond aesthetics.

The *New York Times* immediately reacted with indignation to the idea of relocating the station's columns to Flushing Meadows Park: "With what smug, sentimental self-deprecation we assume that by making some pleasant picturesque arrangement of leftover bits and pieces after razing the original, we are ultimately accomplishing an act of preservation. Nothing could be further from the truth."<sup>212</sup> The *New York Times*'s unwillingness to support what it perceived to be a half-hearted preservation attempt is indicative of previously discussed shifts in postwar preservation ideology. Although late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century preservation focused on creating museums and identifying worthy buildings to maintain as didactic monuments, in the 1950s and 1960s, architects and city planning professionals began re-examining historic architecture's role in the urban environment. In 1960, Greenwich Village resident Jane Jacobs laid the foundation for an innovative urban philosophy with her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Fig. 33). Positing that architectural diversity is a prerequisite for a healthy city, Jacobs argued for a philosophy that favored integrating buildings of different functions and ages: "Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them. By old

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<sup>211</sup> Plosky, "The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station," 28; "Future of Penn Station; Suggestion Offered to Preserve Facade for New Buildings," *New York Times*, May 7, 1962, sec. letter.

<sup>212</sup> "Felt Gives View on Penn Station," *New York Times*, August 26, 1962.



☞ They've put up gleaming stone and glass file cabinet housing which breeds delinquency and crime.

☞ They've built spacious green park areas that are avoided by everyone but bums and hoodlums.

☞ They've condemned and destroyed entire city blocks that are not slums, but attractive places to live.

☞ They've zoned our cities into intolerable patterns of dullness.

Jane Jacobs says this and much more in her explosive new book, *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES*. Mrs. Jacobs shows that the city

planners have failed because they have overlooked the realities of urban life, and stripped our cities of the vitality and diversity which make them exciting places to live. She offers concrete, practical alternatives that can save our cities from the blunders of orthodox planners.

Harrison Salisbury of the *New York Times* hails this book as "the most refreshing, stimulating and exciting study of this greatest of our problems of living which I've seen. It fairly crackles with bright honesty and good sense."

William H. Whyte, author of *The Organization Man*, calls it "magnificent. One of the most remarkable books ever written about the city."

## The Death and Life of Great American Cities

By JANE JACOBS

\$5.95, now at your bookstore

RANDOM HOUSE



Figure 33. Random House advertisement for Jane Jacob's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961.

buildings I mean not museum-piece old buildings, not old buildings in an excellent and expensive state of rehabilitation - although those make fine ingredients - but also a good lot of plain, ordinary, low-value buildings, including some rundown old buildings.”<sup>213</sup> Jacobs challenged the idea of preservation as the creation of museums and static monuments as well as the postwar predilection for replacing the old with the new. Ada Louise Huxtable similarly argued in 1963 that “it is not dead buildings that we need, but a living tradition.”<sup>214</sup> In the early 1960s New Yorkers began to express a desire for “living” buildings in their environment, but this was a more complicated task than maintaining “dead” historic monuments to the past.

Sharing this new attitude, a young generation of architects became Pennsylvania Station’s most vocal advocates, seeking to promote historic preservation as a discipline that thoughtfully and intentionally melded old and new architecture. After a meeting of the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects endorsed a proposal to save only the station’s columns, rather than the whole structure, a number of dissatisfied architects formed the Action Group for Better Architecture in New York (AGBANY).<sup>215</sup> From six founders -- Jordan Gruzen, Norman Jaffe, Diana Kirsch, Peter Samton, Norval White, and Elliot Willensky -- the group quickly grew to include over 175 members

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<sup>213</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vintage Books (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 187.

<sup>214</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, “Architecture: That Was the Week That Was,” *New York Times*, November 3, 1963.

<sup>215</sup> David W. Dunlap, “50 Years Ago, Sharply Dressed Protestors Stood Up for a Train Station They Revered,” *New York Times*, July 31, 2012.

including architects, architectural historians and critics, city planners, and concerned citizens.<sup>216</sup>

AGBANY aimed to increase public awareness of the events transpiring around Pennsylvania Station's demise and to prompt government involvement.<sup>217</sup> In a newspaper ad headlined "Save Our City," AGBANY called for public support at a "peaceful demonstration of affection for this great and threatened building."<sup>218</sup> AGBANY's demonstration, preceded by a press conference, occurred in front of the station on August 2, 1962.<sup>219</sup> Between 50 and 250 marchers stood outside the station's Seventh Avenue entrance carrying signs calling for the station to be protected and repaired rather than demolished (Fig. 34).<sup>220</sup> Protesters included architects Philip Johnson, B. Sumner Gruzen, Paul Rudolph, Ulrich Franzen, and Charles Evan Hughes Jr.; critics and writers Thomas H. Creighton, Aline B. Saarinen, Jane Jacobs, Lewis Mumford, and August Heckscher;

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<sup>216</sup> Other notable members included Norman Mailer, August Heckscher, Lewis Mumford, Henry Hope Reed Jr., Charles Abrams, James Marston Fitch, Ulrich Franzen, and Paul Rudolph. Stern, *New York 1960*, 1115.

<sup>217</sup> "A Brief Proposal for Action to Save Pennsylvania Station," 1963, Box 218, Folder 9, Ada Louise Huxtable Papers, Getty Research Institute.

<sup>218</sup> Ad is referenced with images in Dunlap, "50 Years Ago, Sharply Dressed Protestors Stood Up for a Train Station They Revered."

<sup>219</sup> "Penn Station Ruin Protested," *Progressive Architecture* 43 (September 1962): 63.

<sup>220</sup> Stern, *New York 1960*; "Penn Station Ruin Protested." The number of people reported to have protested varies. Robert Stern provides the lowest estimate, suggesting only 50 people were actually present at the demonstration. At the time of the protest, *Progressive Architecture* reported the presence of over 250 marchers.



Figure 34. Protestors in front of Pennsylvania Station, 1962.

and other concerned citizens such as Ray Rubinow who had been heavily involved in saving Carnegie Hall.<sup>221</sup>

Although AGBANY attempted to spark public concern for New York City's architectural future they also acknowledged that "only action of the city, state, and even Federal bodies can save our fast dwindling legacy of architectural monuments."<sup>222</sup>

AGBANY assumed that the New York City government would continue to take an interest in preservation activity, as it had when Carnegie Hall was threatened. As a result AGBANY formally requested Mayor Robert Wagner's involvement in their campaign instead of attempting to purchase the building themselves.<sup>223</sup> AGBANY pressed Wagner to task his newly formed Landmarks Preservation Commission with compiling a report on the aesthetic and historic significance of Penn Station. In April of 1962 Mayor Wagner had formed the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which was to "identify and designate landmarks, draft a law, and receive and answer preservation questions from other agencies." Although this seemed like a promise of increased government assistance in preservation, in reality the Landmarks Preservation Commission only held

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<sup>221</sup> Foster Hailey, "Architects Fight Penn Station Plans: Architects Right Razing of Station," *New York Times*, August 3, 1962; "Penn Station Ruin Protested."

<sup>222</sup> "A Brief Proposal for Action to Save Pennsylvania Station."

<sup>223</sup> "Frederick J. Woodbridge to Mayor Robert F. Wagner," Frederick Woodbridge appealed to Mayor Wagner as president of the AIA. "AGBANY to Mayor Robert F. Wagner," September 18, 1962. AGBANY met with Mayor Wagner on September 10, 1962 but merely received assurances that they "would have a chance to discuss their objections with the city agencies concerned." Plosky, "The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station," 44.

administrative and advisory power.<sup>224</sup> Even though the Commission could not interfere legislatively, Wagner could still use it to assess Pennsylvania Station's situation. Wagner had additional preservation tools at his disposal as well, such as the Bard Act and the legislation enacted as part of Carnegie Hall's preservation. AGBANY responded with frustration, therefore, when Wagner avoided taking any action to save Penn Station.

Despite his intervention in Carnegie Hall's preservation, Wagner remained publically non-committal with regards to Penn Station. The mayor neither delegated action to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, nor reacted to AGBANY's reminder that the Bard Act, the same legislation amended to preserve Carnegie Hall, allowed the Board of Estimate to condemn and preserve Pennsylvania Station.<sup>225</sup> A key figure in the preservation of Carnegie Hall, Mayor Wagner had had personal and professional motives for assisting Isaac Stern in his attempt to save the Hall. Wagner's cooperation with the Citizens Committee for Carnegie Hall can plausibly be attributed to the friendship he formed with Isaac Stern, as well as his personal investment in Carnegie Hall as an amateur musician with fond memories of the space. The decision not to interfere on behalf of Pennsylvania Station can be traced to the precarious political and economic nature of the circumstances. Preventing the redevelopment of Pennsylvania Station would have resulted in severe economic ramifications for the city. Madison Square Garden was projected to generate around \$120 million dollars for the construction industry, supply

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<sup>224</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 287–300. The Landmarks Preservation Commission did not receive legislative authority until passage of the Landmarks Preservation Law in 1965.

<sup>225</sup> "AGBANY Press Release," 1963, Box 218, Folder 9, Ada Louise Huxtable Papers, Getty Research Institute.

\$5 million in tax revenue for the city, and provide New York with a modern venue that could attract major political conventions.<sup>226</sup> Following Carnegie Hall's preservation, Wagner had also refused to intervene in attempts to preserve Brooklyn Heights or Jefferson Market Courthouse until comprehensive preservation legislation was passed.<sup>227</sup> Wagner's apathy angered preservationists who recognized that useful legislation existed but the mayor consciously chose not to use it due to financial priorities.<sup>228</sup>

Without government support, AGBANY made one final attempt to prevent demolition by stating their case at a New York City Planning Commission public hearing. AGBANY hoped that they could impede the demolition of Pennsylvania Station by convincing the Commission to deny a construction permit for Madison Square Garden.<sup>229</sup> AGBANY defended the station, arguing that it was "an architectural landmark which gives richness and texture to New York."<sup>230</sup> Unions and business organizations countered that Pennsylvania Station "has no city, state, or federal historical significance... It is designed as a copy of an original building in Europe and its removal would in no way affect the historical significance of the original."<sup>231</sup> Even if the City Planning Commission had desired to prevent Pennsylvania Station's demolition it had no direct power to do so. The Planning Commission could deny a building permit for Madison

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<sup>226</sup> Foster Hailey, "Battle Over Future of Penn Station Continues," *New York Times*, September 23, 1962.

<sup>227</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 293.

<sup>228</sup> "AGBANY Press Release."

<sup>229</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 300; Huxtable, "Architecture: How to Kill a City."

<sup>230</sup> "Pennsylvania Station's Last Stand," *The Architectural Forum* 118 (February 1963): 11.

<sup>231</sup> Quote from President of Local 32B, Building Service Employees International Union in Wood, *Preserving New York*, 301.

Square Garden, but it could not base its ruling on the value of the structure already located on the site, only on what would replace it. Huxtable reported on the ineffectiveness of these proceeding with frustration: “The joker here, and it is a terrifying one, is that the City Planning Commission was unable to judge a case like Penn Station’s on the proper and genuine considerations involved.”<sup>232</sup> Despite the passage of the Bard Act, and subsequent amendments instituted to facilitate the City’s acquisition of Carnegie Hall, preservation attempts remained subject to the interests of developers and local government.

In 1963 the City Planning Commission issued a permit for the construction of Madison Square Garden (Fig. 35). Demolition of Penn Station occurred from October 1963 to the summer of 1966; to maintain continuous train service, demolition of Penn Station had to occur simultaneously with the construction of Madison Square Garden (Fig. 36). The lengthy duration of Pennsylvania Station’s removal from the site made it an event “seared into the collective consciousness of the city.”<sup>233</sup> The public’s belated concern for the station has been credited with impacting future preservation efforts despite an initially apathetic reaction to its demise.<sup>234</sup>

### **Carnegie Hall and Penn Station: Preservation Success and Failure**

As contemporary preservationists reflect on the early decades of their discipline, the field has become disposed towards a preservation philosophy that emphasizes the role

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<sup>232</sup> Huxtable, “Architecture: How to Kill a City.”

<sup>233</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 232; Diehl, *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station*, 15–21.

<sup>234</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 324.

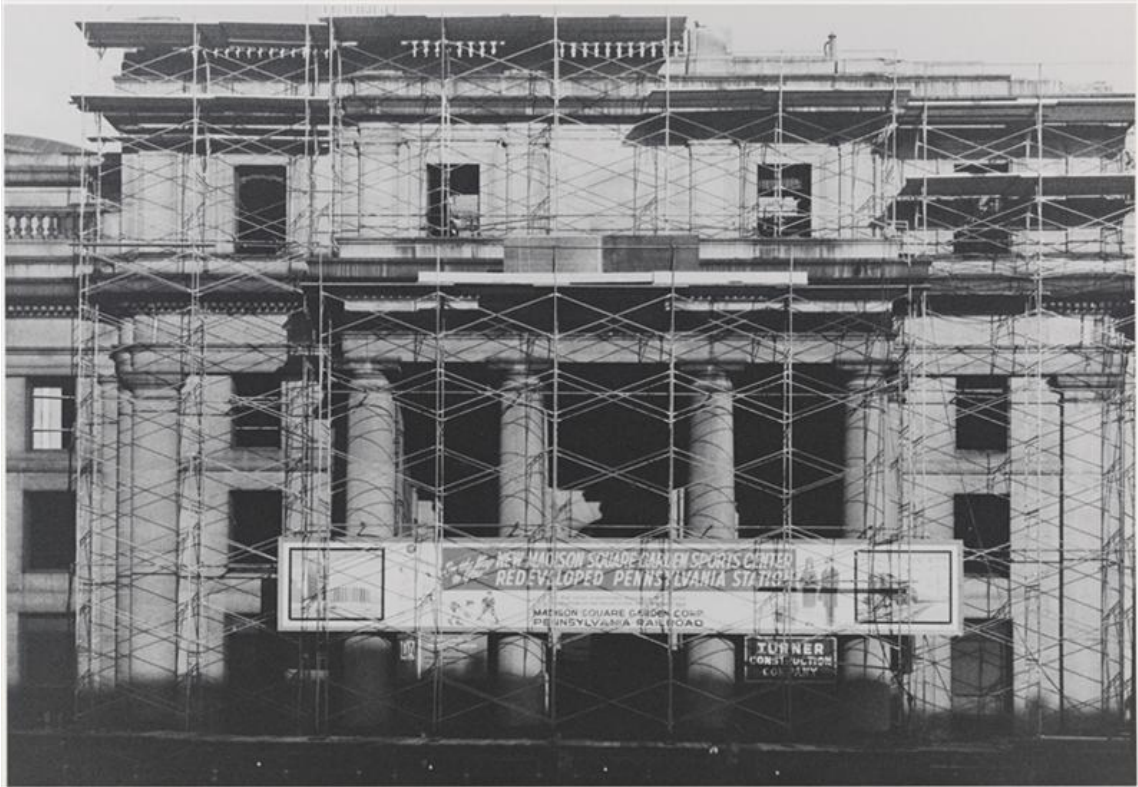


Figure 35. Demolition of Pennsylvania Station, 1964-1965.



Figure 36. Interior Demolition of Pennsylvania Station, 1964-1965.

of memory in protecting existing architecture and shaping the urban environment.<sup>235</sup> For Daniel Bluestone, this means challenging the conception of preservation as a purely aesthetically-oriented endeavor. Rather, Bluestone believes that “understanding preservation involves coming to terms with the ways cultural, economic, political, and historical values are bound up in the fate of historic buildings and landscapes.”<sup>236</sup> This philosophy aptly draws attention to the motives that have underlain much of American historic preservation. As seen in Chapter 2, an understanding of the role that culture and memory play in motivating preservation is vital to making sense of why people valued Carnegie Hall, a building with no inherent architectural significance. It has become a cliché to describe postwar preservation as a reaction to the evils of unfettered development and economic concerns, prompting scholars such as Randall Mason and Max Page to emphasize the role of early preservation in supporting modernity and urban expansion.<sup>237</sup> Randall Mason, for example, promotes an emphasis on memory at the expense of a serious consideration of the economic and financial concerns that impact the success of preservation campaigns:

By dramatically overstating the case that the economy determines every consequence in New York, historians mistakenly suggest that the city’s culture and landscape resulted from a zero-sum game in which commerce and memory are in

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<sup>235</sup> Recent historic scholarship with an emphasis on memory includes Diane L. Barthel, *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Mason, *The Once and Future New York*; Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*; Ned Kaufman, *Place, Race, and Story: Essays on the Past and Future of Historic Preservation* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*.

<sup>236</sup> Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, 14.

<sup>237</sup> Mason, *The Once and Future New York*, xi; Page and Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, 6.

competition, the latter ever beholden to the former. The story of preservation's emergence reminds us that historical memory has long been cultivated (by preservationists among others) despite the power of the market to erase the past.<sup>238</sup>

Mason aims to reframe early American preservation in a new light, giving credence to preservation activity that was not actively fighting against financial priorities. In doing so, however, he discredits the use of market forces as an explanation for postwar preservation as well. Even though the events of postwar preservation are often referenced in vague or simplified terms, the impact of postwar economic concerns and a desire for the continued functionality of New York City's architecture is unavoidable in a discussion of the cultural context of Pennsylvania Station and Carnegie Hall. The postwar dialogue surrounding both buildings is rife with references to concerns of economics and redevelopment. Yet, this thesis demonstrates that the differing results of the attempts to save Carnegie Hall and Pennsylvania Station cannot be explained on the basis of memory alone.

The financial and political challenges that were present in the battle to save Carnegie Hall became even more pronounced in the controversy surrounding Pennsylvania Station. In a culture that valued efficiency over beauty, and newness over age, Pennsylvania Station's case seemed futile as it pitted aesthetic value against financial gain. Although preservationists supported Pennsylvania Station with a variety of motives -- hoping to impact architectural ideology in New York City and preserve a monumental and aesthetically admired building -- their opponents typically reduced such

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<sup>238</sup> Mason, *The Once and Future New York*, xiii.

concerns to mere aesthetic interests, creating a battle preservationists were unlikely to win. In 1968 Ada Louise Huxtable characterized the economic threat to Penn Station:

...buildings, even great ones, become obsolete. Their functions and technology date. They reach a point of comparative inefficiency, and inefficiency today is both a financial and a mortal sin. It would be so simple if art also became obsolete. But a building that may no longer work well or pay its way may still be a superb creative and cultural achievement. It may be the irreproducible record of the art and ideals of a master or an age. Its concept, craft, materials, and details may be irreplaceable at any price (yes, some things are without price and that puts them at a distinct disadvantage) and therein lies the conflict and dilemma of preservation.<sup>239</sup>

Pennsylvania Station's preservationists could defend the station an irreplaceable element of New York City's cultural and artistic heritage, but they could not escape the fact that the station would be judged in terms of function, efficiency, and finance. "The ultimate tragedy is that such architectural nobility has become economically obsolete, so that we must destroy it for shoddier buildings and lesser values," wrote the *New York Times* in 1962.<sup>240</sup> The AIA reiterated the same stance in their New York chapter magazine, *Oculus*: "New York seems bent on tearing down its finest buildings... No opinion based on the artistic worth of a building is worth two straws when huge sums and huge enterprises are at stake."<sup>241</sup> It seems that those involved in Pennsylvania Station's demolition had become aware of the economic reality that trumped all of their arguments for saving the structure.

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<sup>239</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "Anatomy of a Failure," in *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?* (New York, N.Y.: The Macmillian Company, 1963), 232–36.

<sup>240</sup> "Felt Gives View on Penn Station."

<sup>241</sup> Charles G. Bennett, "City Acts to Save Historical Sites," *New York Times*, April 22, 1962.

Despite its reputation as an architectural masterpiece, McKim's station lacked Carnegie Hall's financial viability. Carnegie Hall was a lucrative music venue before and after its preservation but Pennsylvania Station was vulnerable largely because the space no longer produced a profit. Upset with his public image as a "greedy despoiler of his city's heritage," Irving Felt, president of Madison Square Garden Center, questioned the practicality of Pennsylvania Station's preservation: "Who pays us for the large expenditures we have already made? Who subsidizes the Pennsylvania Railroad? Who makes up the tax loss involved?" Felt wholeheartedly believed that "the gain from the new buildings and sports center would more than offset any aesthetic loss."<sup>242</sup> A.J. Greenough, the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, argued that protesting the demolition of Pennsylvania Station was irresponsible because Madison Square Garden would profit the whole neighborhood. Greenough believed that the Pennsylvania Railroad was obligated to operate as efficiently as possible out of consideration for the public, its stockholders, and employees. Like Felt, Greenough reminded the public that Penn Station no longer functioned practically: "Does it make any sense to attempt to preserve a building merely as a 'monument' when it no longer serves the utilitarian needs for which it was erected?"<sup>243</sup> Even some architects believed that without a functional purpose, it was not worthwhile to save Penn Station. Robert E. Alexander wrote that "[Penn Station] is surely one of a few examples we have of a great space in this country. Naturally, I contemplate the destruction of this great hall with nostalgia and romantic

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<sup>242</sup> Hailey, "Battle Over Future of Penn Station Continues."

<sup>243</sup> A.J. Greenough, "Redeveloping Penn Station: Railroad's President Says Area and Public Will Benefit," *Letters to the Times*, August 23, 1962.

regret. On the other hand, I have hardly ever traveled by train in the last thirty years. I am more interested in promoting a space as meaningful for the air traveler today than in obstructing the contemplated re-use of the Penn Station site.”<sup>244</sup> Carnegie Hall’s owner, Robert E. Simon Jr., also felt an obligation to his stockholders, but the arguments that persuaded him to aid Carnegie Hall’s preservation were not based on its aesthetic worth as a monument or the admiration of the architectural profession. Rather than attempt to defend Carnegie Hall’s architectural merit, preservationists appealed to economic concerns about its value and profitability. Focusing on Carnegie Hall’s practical, functional, benefit to New York City, preservation efforts benefited from the emphasis Isaac Stern’s committee placed on future uses of the building. Additionally, Stern formulated a detailed plan for saving the Hall, accounting for how New York City’s Board of Estimate could acquire the money needed to purchase the building without upsetting citizens concerned for their tax dollars. The end result allowed the city to purchase the property from Simon for a fee comparable to what he would have received from a private investor. Simon willingly cooperated with preservationists as they sought to save the building, and potential investor Louis Glickman sympathetically offered to sell Carnegie Hall to the Philharmonic Orchestra or any other interested party. Economic concerns may have pressured Simon to sell the building, but he did not show an eagerness to see it torn down.

In contrast to Isaac Stern’s strategy for purchasing Carnegie Hall, AGBANY never created a viable solution to the problem that Pennsylvania Station was no longer

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<sup>244</sup> Robert E. Alexander, Letter to Progressive Architecture, 1962 quoted in Plosky, “The Fall and Rise of Pennsylvania Station.”

financially sustainable. The scope of the Madison Square Garden project, its \$120 million price tag and promise of revenue for the government and investors, made it extremely difficult to create a realistic plan for preserving the structure that could appeal to all those involved. AGBANY proposed that the Port of New York Authority acquire and operate the station. This proposal, however, did not solve the problem that train travel had become a money losing business; nor did preservationists detail how government purchase and operation of Pennsylvania Station would be accomplished. The Port Authority might have operated the station successfully, but city leadership showed no interest in implementing this scheme. This more nuanced look at the preservation of Penn Station in relation to Carnegie Hall reaffirms a conflict between economic and ideological forces. To paint these sides in terms of good and bad would be far too simplistic an endeavor, however, an acknowledgment of the economic and political forces at play are vital to learning from the success and failure of these two case studies.

AGBANY's effort to save Pennsylvania Station also reveals an attempt to continue the new preservation methods and ideology established by the preservation of Carnegie Hall. Historic preservation in New York City continued on a new trajectory away from the policies and practices of the nineteenth century. David Lowenthal posits that historic preservation exists as a reaction to loss, yet the loss experienced in the postwar period was not identical to that experienced one hundred years prior.<sup>245</sup>

Preservationists in the 1950s were motivated by “an unrelenting assault on New York City's historic fabric,” a clash between modern designs and the “sensibilities” of the

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<sup>245</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, 23.

existing building that they replaced. Many New Yorker's feared the day that their city would be entirely skyscrapers with no past.<sup>246</sup> They were no longer worried about forces threatening their sense of national identity, but rather by ever present environmental changes driven by for-profit development. The urban transformation of the 1950s not only impacted American's lives in practical ways, introducing new means of transportation and a new suburban lifestyle, but also threatened their sense of stability by endangering buildings that held personal and collective memories. The design professionals who constituted the majority of Pennsylvania Station's advocates addressed concerns about the building's future in architectural terms and contemplated its impact on the future of New York City's urban design. Directly challenging the architectural status quo by defending the importance of such a monumental structure, Pennsylvania Station's supporters hoped to create a culture more attuned to the benefits of historic architecture. AGBANY directly stated that their goals went beyond merely attempting to save Pennsylvania Station; they intended to "put a stop to the wanton destruction of our greatest buildings" and "serve notice upon present and future vandals that we will fight them every step of the way."<sup>247</sup> Carnegie Hall's preservationists also did not wish to see uninhibited economic interests prevail. Because Carnegie Hall's preservationists were not concerned with aesthetics they faced the challenge of defending unpopular architecture as vital to New York City. They promoted a practical approach to preservation concerned with the building's continued functionality rather than the creation of a static, symbolic

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<sup>246</sup> Wood, *Preserving New York*, 330.

<sup>247</sup> Dunlap, "50 Years Ago, Sharply Dressed Protestors Stood Up for a Train Station They Revered."

monument and in the process helped transform New York City's preservation movement from a "a genteel exercise in patriotic symbolism to a powerful grass-roots movement supported by professional disciplines."<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, 7.

## Conclusion

Nothing makes a New Yorker happier than the site of an old building rich in memories of the past - unless it is tearing the damn thing down and replacing it with something in chromium and plate glass, with no traditions at all.

*Time*, January 23, 1950<sup>249</sup>

West 57th Street is the epicenter of the luxury glass-box boom, in which the lovely old buildings that give New York character are being replaced by bland monoliths. Given that the [Landmarks Preservation Commission] is often all that stands between a neighborhood icon and a wrecking ball, it needs, at the very least, to work on its response time.

“The Tyranny of the Glass Boxes,” *New York Times*, April 21, 2014

Fifty years after passing the Landmarks Preservation Law, New York City continues to grapple with the challenging task of choosing historic buildings for landmark designation. New York City’s creation of a legislative framework for historic preservation, in the decades following World War II, provided tools for architectural protection by systematizing the preservation process. Even following the institution of a formalized process, preservation decisions remain subjective and controversial. In each case, New York City’s local government is forced to choose whether to prioritize aesthetic, historical, economic, or political interests. The implementation of tax credit

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<sup>249</sup> Quoted in Wood, *Preserving New York*, 6.

programs and detailed requirements for both landmark designation and subsequent architectural renovation and rehabilitation have cemented a relationship between economics, politics, and preservation.<sup>250</sup> As a result, rulings of the Landmarks Preservation Commission rarely appease both popular opinion and real estate developers.

In the decades following Carnegie Hall's preservation real estate developers have continued to radically reconstruct the surrounding neighborhood. Carnegie Hall remains an isolated music venue in the midst of a bustling commercial center. When restoration of Carnegie Hall began in the 1980s, critics such as Paul Golberger voiced concerns about the architecture surrounding the music hall, specifically the potential for overbuilding on Fifty-Sixth and Fifty-Seventh Streets.<sup>251</sup> Almost three decades later, similar questions continue to arise. In 2009, the site across the street from Carnegie Hall was slated for redevelopment.<sup>252</sup> The Landmarks Preservation Commission denied landmark designation for an eight-story building on the site, but granted protection to an adjacent, stylistically similar, structure (Fig. 37).<sup>253</sup> More recently, in April 2014, the Rizzoli

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<sup>250</sup> For a concise summary of historic preservation incentives currently offered in New York City see Historic Districts Council, *Financial Incentives for Historic Buildings*, accessed May 23, 2015, <http://hdc.org/financial%20incentives%20brochure.pdf>; Current rules and regulations for historic preservation in New York City are published in NYC Landmarks preservation Commission, *Rules of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Title 63, Rules of the City of New York*, January 2013, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/pubs/rules.pdf>.

<sup>251</sup> Paul Goldberger, "Carnegie Hall Details Plans for Office Tower," *The New York Times*, April 30, 1986, sec. Arts, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/30/arts/carnegie-hall-details-plans-for-office-tower.html>.

<sup>252</sup> 225 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street is currently being redeveloped as part of the Nordstrom Tower, to be officially located at 217 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. The new tower has been designed to be the tallest residential building in the world. Nikolai Fedak, "Revealed: 217 West 57th Street, Official Renderings for World's Future Tallest Residential Building," *New York YIMBY*, April 20, 2015, <http://newyorkyimby.com/2015/04/revealed-217-west-57th-street-official-renderings-for-worlds-future-tallest-residential-building.html>.

<sup>253</sup> "Divided Landmarks Panel Splits Decision on Midtown Buildings," *City Room*, accessed April 27, 2014, <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/10/landmarks-panel-split-vote-on-midtown-buildings/>.



Figure 37. *Left:* The B.F. Goodrich Company building (1780 Broadway) received landmark designation. *Right:* The adjacent building at 225 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street was denied landmark designation.



Figure 38. Protestors gather outside Rizzoli bookstore, 2014.

Building located on West Fifty-Seventh Street faced an uncertain future. Constructed in 1919, it has been repeatedly threatened with demolition despite public appeals (Fig. 38).<sup>254</sup> The Landmarks Preservation Commission declined the opportunity to intervene in the Rizzoli Building's fate, citing as justification the fact that its interior was modified in 1985 and therefore did not qualify for preservation.<sup>255</sup>

In light of such controversies, the fiftieth anniversary of New York City's Landmarks Preservation Law has prompted significant reflection on the effectiveness of historic preservation in the city today. One such reflective article, an editorial published in the *New York Times*, laments the role that money plays in current preservation practice. It points out that real estate developers and preservationists remain at odds and the Landmarks Preservation Commission suffers from a shortage of funds that limits the scope of its effectiveness. Although 27 percent of buildings in Manhattan have landmarks status, the author of the editorial asserts that landmark legislation is not being used aggressively enough and that the city government is still unsure of how it will balance preservation with plans for enhancing urban space and quality of life.<sup>256</sup> Existing architecture in New York City remains susceptible to economic pressure, often at the

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<sup>254</sup> The Editorial Board, "The Tyranny of the Glass Boxes," *New York Times*, April 21, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/22/opinion/the-tyranny-of-the-glass-boxes.html>.

<sup>255</sup> James Barron, "It's Leaving 57th Street, but Rizzoli Bookstore Vows Sequel," *New York Times*, April 11, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/12/nyregion/its-leaving-57th-street-but-rizzoli-bookstore-vows-sequel.html>.

<sup>256</sup> The Editorial Board, "New York City's Landmarks Law at 50," *New York Times*, April 17, 2015, sec. The Opinion Pages, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/18/opinion/new-york-citys-landmarks-law-at-50.html>.

expense of buildings with aesthetic and cultural significance.<sup>257</sup> Carnegie Hall, therefore, provides a highly applicable case study with implications for preservation practice and philosophy today.

The preservation of Carnegie Hall, which I present in comparison with the demolition of Pennsylvania Station, clearly demonstrates the power that economic forces wield in historic preservation. Carnegie Hall's narrative illustrates that postwar economic forces easily trumped concerns for preserving repositories of memory and symbols of culture. Although John Totten appealed to sentiment, as well as respect for a monument of cultural and historical value, Carnegie Hall was not saved for the memory infrastructure it represented but rather by Isaac Stern's apt response to the economic pressures of redevelopment. Totten incorrectly presumed individuals' memories of the building would prompt sufficient monetary support for his cause. In comparison, Isaac Stern's success came from his effective navigation of the economic and political obstacles to the Hall's protection. By prompting the involvement of high-profile international musicians and involving lawyers and politicians, Stern made Carnegie Hall's protection into a battle that New York City's political power structure was willing to support. He valued Carnegie Hall because of its cultural significance yet effectively turned this motivation into a practical plan for maintaining the Hall's longevity, without

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<sup>257</sup> Aby J. Rosen, owner of the Seagram Building recently incited controversy with plans to remodel the Four Seasons Restaurant: Phyllis Lambert, "Save New York's Four Seasons," *New York Times*, May 15, 2015; Robin Pogrebin, "Landmarks Commission Rejects Plan to Change Interior of Four Seasons," *New York Times*, May 19, 2015; Kia Gregory, "In Harlem, Renaissance Theater Is at the Crossroad of Demolition and Preservation," *New York Times*, December 19, 2014; Matt Chaban, "Proposal Would Trim New York City's List of Potential Landmarks," *New York Times*, December 1, 2014; Matt Chaban, "Landmarks Panel Drop Proposal to Trim List," *New York Times*, December 4, 2014; The Editorial Board, "The Tyranny of the Glass Boxes."

placing an unreasonable financial burden on Robert E. Simon Jr., the city government, or the concerned constituency. Stern's plan to sway political opinion in order to purchase the Hall benefited from his status as an internationally-famed musician whose reputation preceded him.

Stern succeeded on the basis of an economically viable preservation plan, one that did not take the Hall's aesthetics as a primary consideration. The preservation of Carnegie Hall, an aesthetically disdained building, required Stern's emphasis on the continued functionality of the structure as a selling point to New York City's local government. Stern and his committee countered the building's maligned architecture and economic "inefficiency" by emphasizing its usefulness and proposing a solution that would appeal to those who viewed the site in solely economic terms. In this way, Stern and his associates thought more holistically than their predecessors, viewing the building as part of the larger culture and urban environment of New York City. Stern did not stage protests or rallies, but rather worked directly with the government to reach a solution, emphasizing the practical uses of the space and its value to all New Yorkers, not just a niche architectural audience. Government purchase of the property, and subsequent transfer of the building to the Carnegie Hall Corporation, protected the memories attached to Carnegie Hall and its unrivaled acoustics. Most importantly, however, it also appeased the economic interests of Robert E. Simon Jr. and his investors.

The conclusions I draw from Pennsylvania Station's demolition confirm my view that it is imperative to consider economic and financial concerns alongside questions of aesthetics and culture in preservation cases. The battle that Pennsylvania Station's

advocates fought in the name of aesthetics and architectural ideology neglected the development of a feasible economic solution for the problems that precipitated the station's demise. With no profitable function and no funding for repairs, Penn Station's neglected architecture had no practical future. Carnegie Hall's continued functionality ensured that it made economic sense to protect the building and its use. This provided Carnegie Hall with an advantage over Pennsylvania Station because in each case the decision-makers who wanted to demolish the buildings were first and foremost concerned with receiving a return on their investment. Daniel Bluestone supports the assertion that continued functionality is vital to preservation, stating that "the surest route to preservation is for individuals, communities or institutions to actively cultivate a place for continuing use, for history and memory, within their own culture."<sup>258</sup>

In my view, both case studies demonstrate that preservationists must consider how their motivations for preservation, whether a desire to protect memories or aesthetics, can be turned into a practically implemented plan. As scholar Diane Barthel explains:

Preservationists can help develop the sense of solidarity and can reinforce collective memory by identifying and interpreting social markers by working with communities. But they can never hope to rise above politics, to reach a point where all people worship at the same shrines and in the same manner. Interpretation will remain political because people have always been political animals and because our collective memories contain elements that are both shared and political.

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<sup>258</sup> Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory*, 78.

While beauty and memories play a role in motivating the desire to save buildings, preservationists cannot assume that these factors will be given priority by decision makers.

The preservation of Carnegie Hall and the demolition of Pennsylvania Station resulted in the creation of legislation that has further intertwined preservation with politics and economics. Contemporary preservation theory places emphasis on memory, but has largely discounted the need to evaluate economic and political influences on the outcome of preservation efforts. Max Page and Randall Mason have beneficially expanded the history of historic preservation by focusing on the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet by emphasizing the role that collective memory played at the turn-of-the-century, they have largely overlooked the lessons to be learned from the postwar period. A similar shortcoming can be seen in the recent work of Ned Kaufman's book, *Place, Race, and Story*, which makes the case that "while preservationists elect for tactical reasons to play the market game, they should never forget that their most enduring strategic strengths are cultural, historical, aesthetic, and communitarian, and that broad, lasting success can only come from them."<sup>259</sup> The history of Carnegie Hall, contrasted with that of Pennsylvania Station, makes a different case. If preservationists are to be successful, they should acknowledge the political nature of their undertaking and the market forces that govern the future of even New York City's most admired architectural achievements. Such a task requires balancing preservation concerns with social and economic considerations, including profit-driven development. The practical

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<sup>259</sup> Kaufman, *Place, Race, and Story*, 396.

application of such a negotiation between past and future, the protection of buildings while accounting for competing emotional, aesthetic, and practical forces, may not be a straightforward task but it is a vital one.

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