

# THE HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK

McKIM, MEAD & WHITE, ARCHITECTS

**T**HE Hotel Pennsylvania has been built for the Pennsylvania Terminal Real Estate Company, a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, and is leased and operated by the Hotels Statler Company, Inc., who participated in the solution of the many problems which the development of the plans brought forth.

The building is the work of a firm that has established traditions in our American architectural development by designing wisely and well in many branches of building construction in this country. McKim, Mead and White were also responsible for the Pennsylvania Railroad Station, which faces the hotel on the opposite side of Seventh Avenue, and is in itself one of the landmarks of architectural progress in America.

In designing the hotel for the same owners, the architects have studied to relate the two structures in scale and expression.

Attention is called to the setting-back from the regular city building lines of both the station and the hotel to produce the effect of a plaza.

The site of the hotel occupies the block front, 200 feet long, between 32nd and 33d Streets, on the east side of Seventh Avenue, and extending eastward 400 feet from Seventh Avenue to the property line of Gimbel Brothers' department store which occupies the remainder of the block to Sixth Avenue.

The plan has the proportions of a double square, and all its details and circumstances are developments from the solution of the typical bedroom floor illustrated on page 57. After a period of study, the scheme of wings with courts open to the south was adopted. The

wings are 54 feet wide and the courts 40 feet wide, excepting the easterly court next to the Gimbel Brothers' store which is 50 feet wide. A glance at a typical bedroom floor plan shows one long corridor running east and west with connecting corridors to the wings, running north and south. The width of the wings, 54 feet, was adopted after careful study to give a room depth of approximately 15 feet with a six-foot passage way and bathroom between the bedroom and the corridor hall.

The Seventh Avenue wing was set aside for especially attractive rooms designed to give the highest class of accommodations. These rooms overlook the Pennsylvania Station. They are large, a bay of framing being devoted to each bedroom, while in the other wings there are in general two rooms to a bay of framing.

The northerly portion of the building, overlooking 33d Street, was planned after the scheme of passenger elevator service had been determined. The passenger elevator hall, on the axis of the second wing, is near the Seventh Avenue front and convenient to the higher priced rooms. In working out the details of the bedroom floors, the principles already evolved by Mr. E. M. Statler for his chain of hotels with a definite type of service in view were the controlling features.

The sub-basement floor plan, see page 62, takes in the space which was partly pre-empted by the Pennsylvania Railroad and Long Island Railroad tunnels, which find their way into 32nd and 33d Streets at this level. There is an underground passage to the



The Hotel Pennsylvania, New York  
McKim, Mead & White, Architects

Pennsylvania Station at this level, reached from the hotel by a pair of elevators running to the main lobby, three floors above. The western half of the sub-basement is occupied by the laundries and the eastern half by machinery of various kinds, ice-making machines, compressors, tanks, etc. Power is supplied from the Pennsylvania Station power houses in 31st Street, and exhaust steam from the same source is used in the heating system. This plan is similar to that adopted in connection with the Commodore and Biltmore hotels adjacent to the Grand Central Terminal. As we reach the roof of the tunnels, there is a level called the sub-basement mezzanine, see page 62, through which the upper part of the laundry extends. This level is devoted to store-rooms, lockers and the cafeteria for employees.

On the basement floor, see page 62, which is next above and is the first floor below the street level, are entrances from the Interborough Subway platforms. A passage under the 33d Street sidewalk, connecting these platforms with those of the Hudson and the Manhattan Railway Station at Sixth Avenue and 33d Street, is proposed for development in the near future. The entire easterly half of the basement floor is devoted to the main kitchen. The westerly half is given over to a large grill room with an area of over 7,000 square feet, a general wash-room, a barber shop

and a lunch room, these latter occupying the extreme westerly end and opening onto the subway platforms.

The first floor, at the street level, is largely the solution of a problem in circulation—the accommodation and control of the arriving and departing guests and the throngs of more casual diners, dancers and others. The main entrance in the center of the Seventh Avenue facade, leads into the main lobby, which is approximately 70 feet by 133 feet, including space which is partly overhung by a mezzanine gallery supported by a colonnade surrounding the entire lobby.

In designing the lobby, the architects made an effort to produce an imposing effect, a tremendous vestibule for a hotel of extraordinary proportions. The result is that one is immediately impressed with the feeling of great spaciousness properly related in scale to the great terminal across the street. There is no crowding or confusion among the throngs that pass through and the entire problem of circulation on the first or main floor, as the plan on page 58 shows, has been studied very carefully with a view to avoiding *cul de sacs* in any direction. Note the complete circulation around the palm room.

On opposite sides of the main lobby, the hall containing the passenger elevators and the main office face each other. Just south of the main en-



Typical Floor Plan

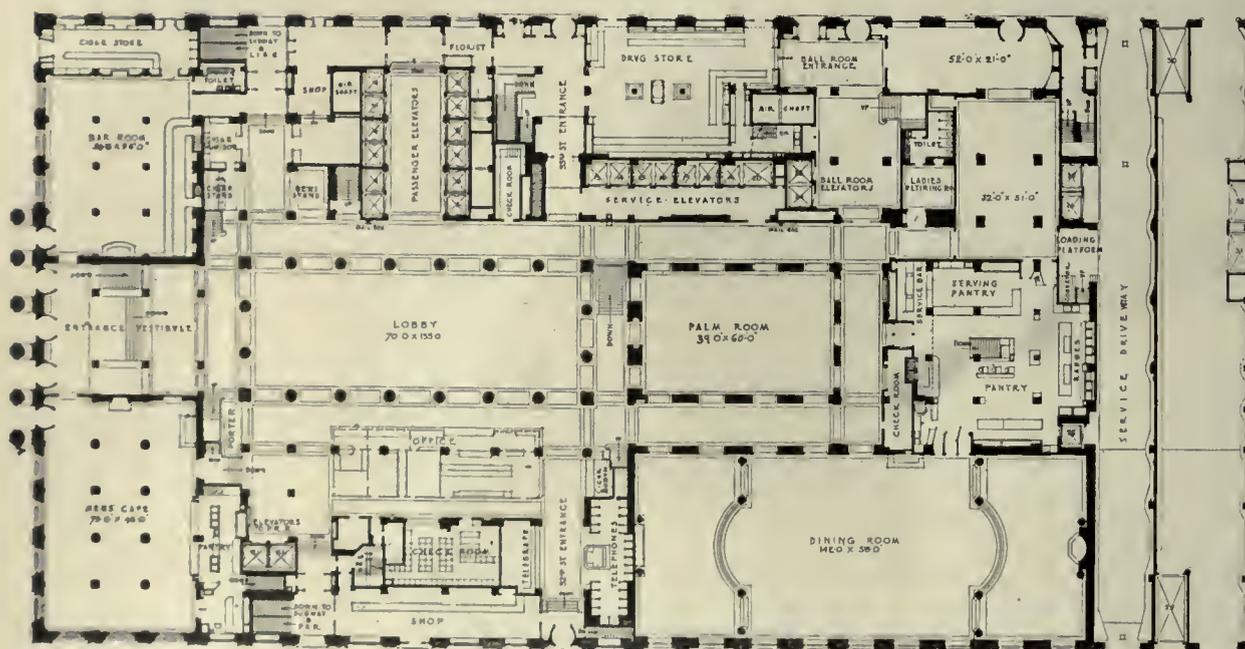
trance is the landing of the private elevators from the Pennsylvania Terminal which bring the arriving guests directly to the main office. On either side of the entrance from Seventh Avenue are the bar at the north and the café at the south. The latter is a quick-service dining-room with open grill.

In the center of the building, on 32nd and 33d Streets, are entrances connected by a broad corridor running north and south, approximately bisecting the main floor, at the easterly end of the main lobby. Farther to the east on 33d Street is a ball-room entrance with its own stairway



Lobby from the Seventh Avenue Entrance

and elevators. The main dining room, on the 32nd Street side, south of the tea room, opens onto the south arm of the promenade which, as mentioned above, is an extension of the lobby circulatory scheme. The dining room measures 58 feet by 142 feet and the ceiling is 22 feet in height. It is one of the largest rooms of its kind anywhere. It is divided into a large central area and a terrace at each end which is raised 18 inches above the floor level of the central portion. The terraces were designed to break up the monotony of so large a floor space and to afford those guests who choose or are



First Floor Plan

obliged to occupy tables at the ends of the room a view of the entire scene of activities in the main portion of the room.

A feature of interest in the study of the first floor plan is the arrangement at the extreme easterly end of the building, where the site of the hotel abuts on the property occupied by the department store.

To eliminate the objectionable sights and sounds incident to the shipping and receiving business of the store and hotel, which would otherwise be conducted largely across the sidewalk and in the roadway of 32nd and 33d Streets, the owners of the hotel have voluntarily cut off 50 feet at the rear of their site, next to the department store building, which has been converted into two driveways, one for the use of the hotel and the other as a loading and shipping drive for Gimbel Brothers. Mention should be made of the mezzanine floor over the main office which is used for the manager's

headquarters, bookkeeping department, etc.

The first mezzanine floor plan, illustrated on page 62, shows a gallery entirely around the upper part of the lobby, serving as a promenade and lounge. Opening from the gallery on the south side is the writing room and library, and on the Seventh Avenue front is a large area which has been set aside as a place for the exhibition of special merchandise for which temporary display space may be required by manufacturers or

agents. The easterly half of the first mezzanine floor is taken up with the upper part of palm room and main dining room, printing shop, carpentry shop, and offices and maids' dining rooms. From the hotel driveway mentioned above, a conveyor takes the trunks up to the receiving room on this floor, and thence to the service elevators without change of direction.

From the first mezzanine gallery, a rise of eight feet takes us to the main ballroom floor, the plan of which is reproduced on page 60. The ballroom floor is an entertaining floor a little over 200 feet square, absolutely complete with its service rooms, toilets, checking facilities, banquet kitchens, and rooms for all sizes and kind of parties, and with instant and easy access to the street and also to the main body of the hotel. The ballroom is easy of access from the main passenger elevator group and the mezzanine gallery of the lobby. It also has its special stairway and elevator with



Detail of Main Lobby Colonnade

an entrance directly from 33d Street on the north side of the building.

To reach the ballroom from either of these approaches one passes through a grand foyer on either side of which are parlors which can be used as additional reception rooms or checking space. Following the policy adopted by the leasee no permanent check-room facilities are provided, but instead removable and temporary furniture for the purpose, to be used when necessity arises in rooms

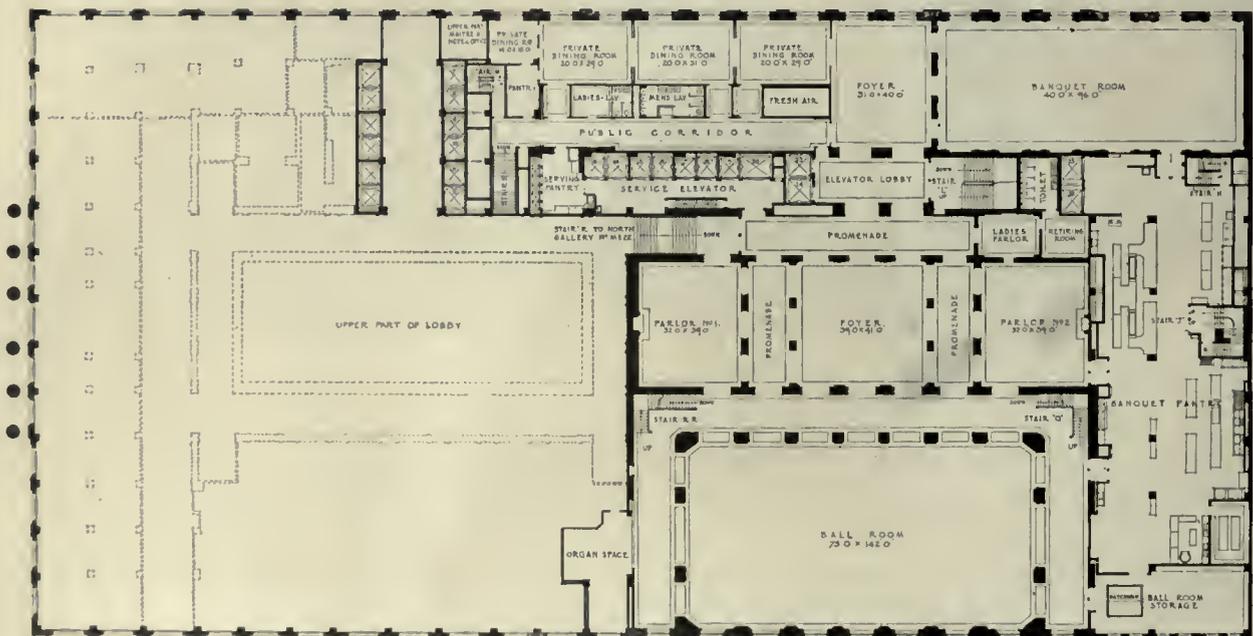
otherwise available for entertainment. The ballroom runs the entire length of the main dining room directly below and is about 12 feet wider with a gallery of boxes around three sides. Its dimensions, 75 feet by 152 feet and 30 feet high, make it one of the largest rooms of its kind.

To the north of the ballroom entrance lobby are private dining rooms and a smaller banquet room with a foyer, and at the east end, over the driveway, the banquet kitchen. Two floors are taken up for the housing of the employees in the upper part of the lobby and ballroom floor before the level of bedroom courts is reached.



Corridor of Main Lobby

Summarizing the outline of the building given above: the main lobby with its framing above takes up almost three and one-half average floors in height; the main dining room, and a tea room, one and one-half stories; and the ballroom about two and one-half stories. The solid part of the building, up to the level of the typical bedroom floor, consists of first or main floor, first mezzanine, ballroom floor, second mezzanine and second floor, of which the second mezzanine and second floor are simply the portions left of the rooms with great ceiling heights, and are devoted to the housing of employees.



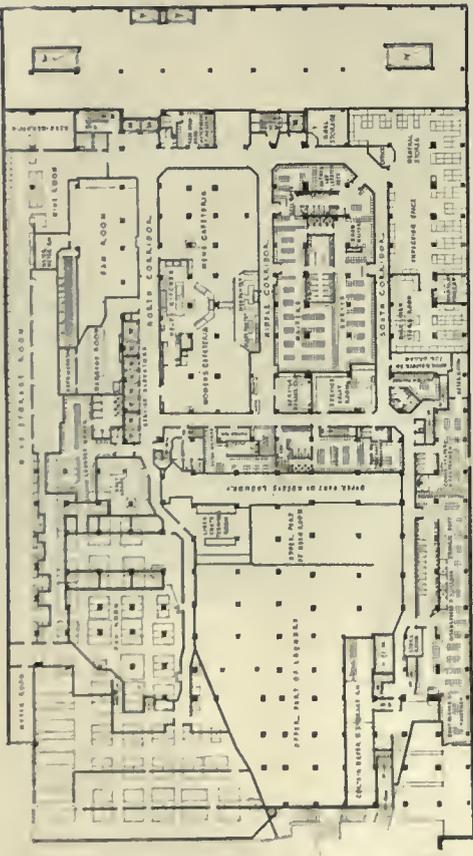
Ballroom Floor Plan



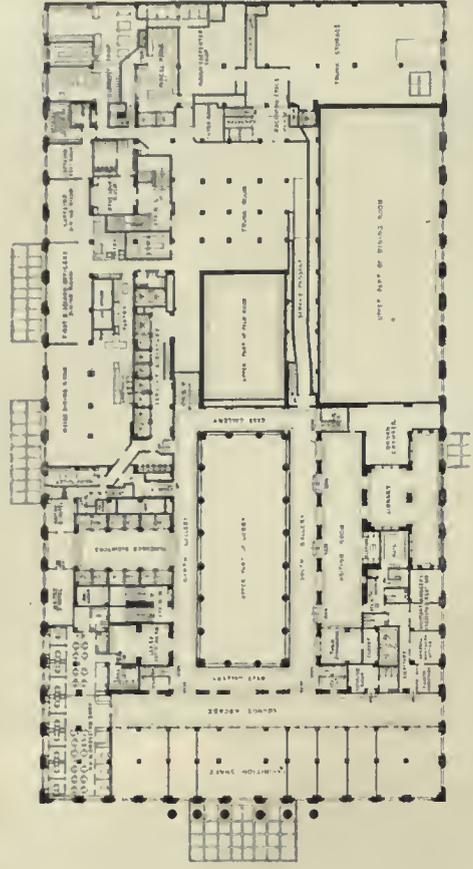
West Wall, Main Dining Room



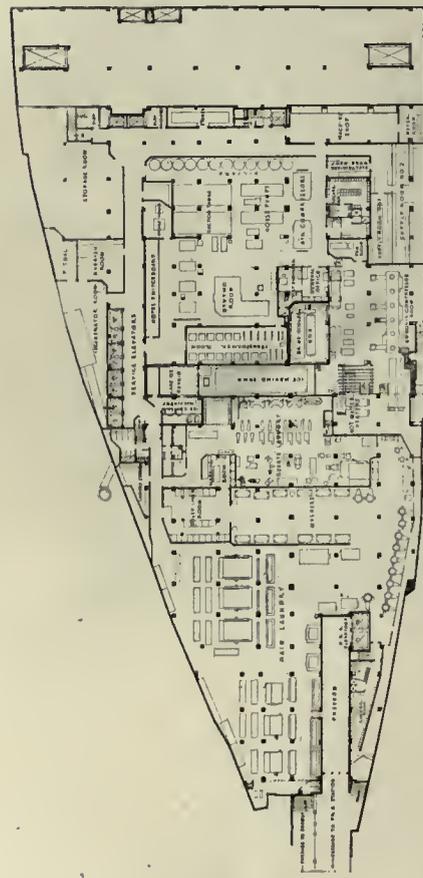
East Wall, Main Dining Room  
The Hotel Pennsylvania, New York  
McKim, Mead & White, Architects



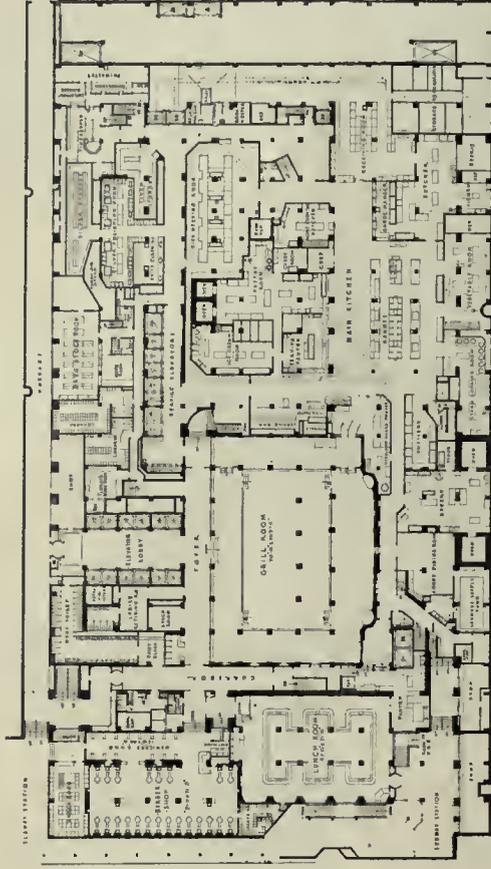
SUB-BASEMENT MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN



FIRST MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN



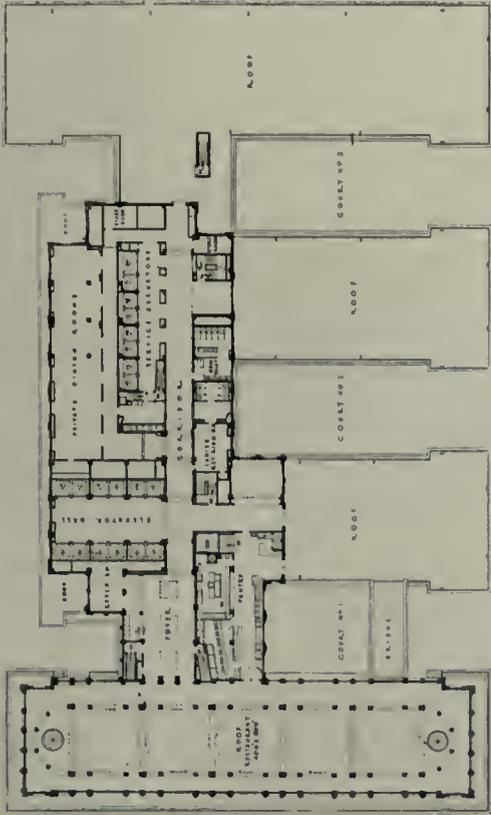
SUB-BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN



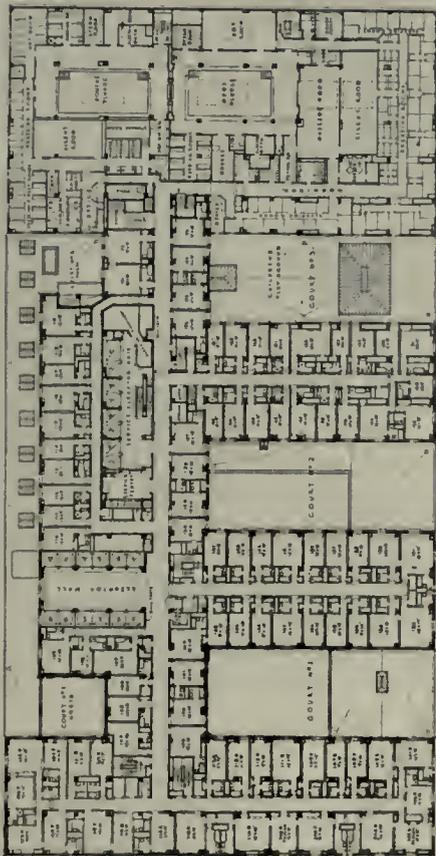
BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

THE HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK

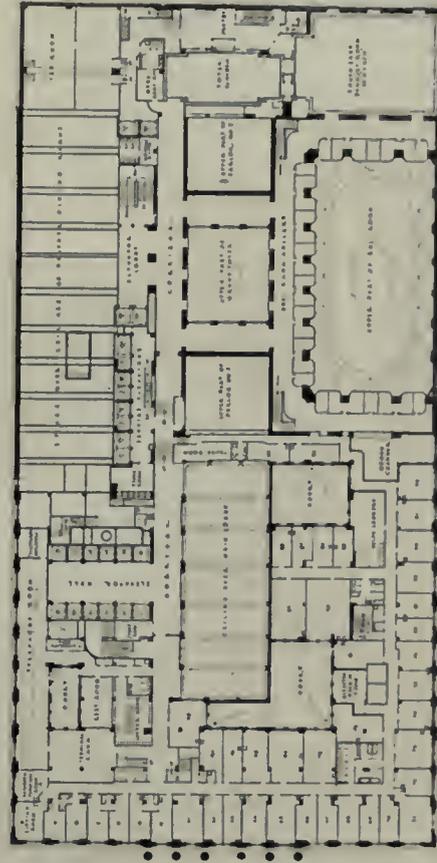
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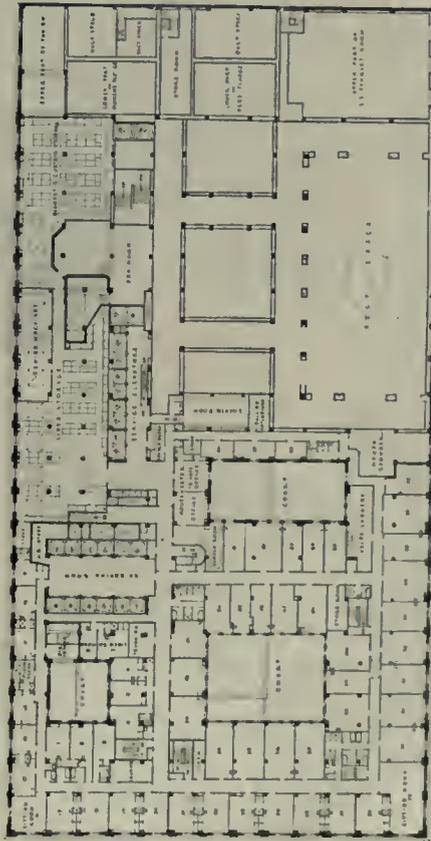
MAIN ROOF PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



SECOND MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

THE HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK

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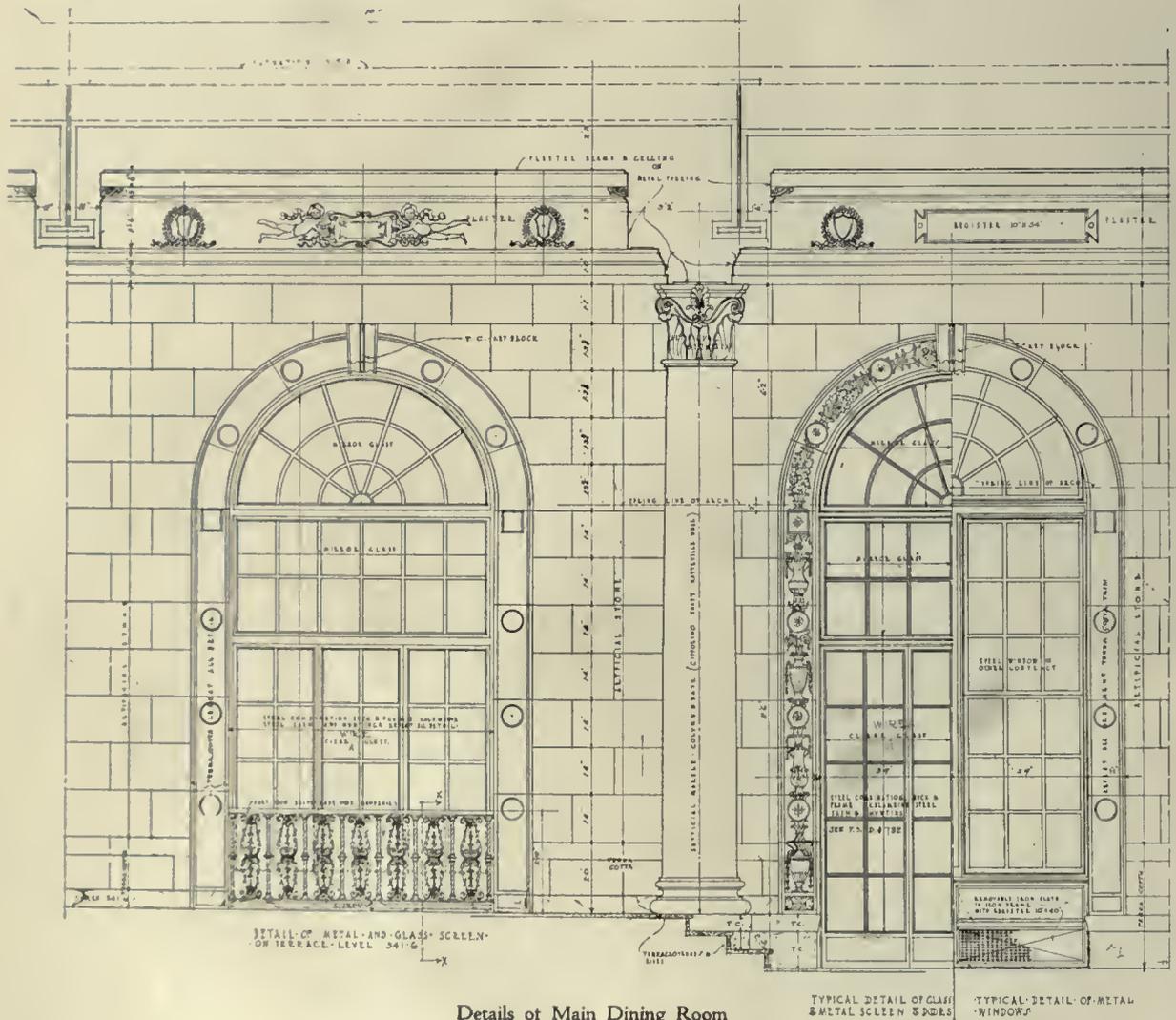
The first bedroom floor is typical of all, except that at the easterly end, over the driveways, is a Turkish bath establishment with separate plunges, steam rooms, etc., for men and women. The bedroom floors from the second floor to the seventh floors inclusive are typical except for special suites on the seventh floor and the sixteenth floor with larger bedrooms, living room, dining room and serving pantry. On the so-called third floor we find the first of the typical bedroom floors, of which there are seventeen.

The entire roof on the west, or Seventh Avenue end, is occupied by a roof restaurant usable all the year around. It is really a big roof house and can be used as a summer dining room or during the other parts of the year as a banquet room. The roofs of the other wings are left open for future development. It is proposed that the roof of the second wing be used for an open-air roof-garden, and it has been connected by a bridge

across the first court with the roof restaurant. Provision has been made in the framing of the building by which this scheme of bridges can be extended across the entire series of courts.

In order to relate the exterior of the building with the Pennsylvania Station opposite, the lower stories to a height equal to that of the station have been treated as a solid base faced with Indiana limestone and given a monumental character by an order of Roman Ionic pilasters. The walls between the pilasters are lightly rusticated and there is a story of ashlar above. The main entrance in the center of the Seventh Avenue facade is emphasized by a portico with six Ionic columns.

With respect to the problems of interior architectural design and decoration, the hotel affords abundant opportunity for study. Entering the main lobby, the effect of spaciousness is so happily impressed on the mind, that the thought of being at the bottom of a twenty-story building is en-



Details of Main Dining Room

TYPICAL DETAIL OF GLASS & METAL SCREEN & SILL

TYPICAL DETAIL OF METAL WINDOW

tirely lost. This effect is enhanced by the use of a metal-and-glass ceiling over the central portion of the main lobby, lighted from above by indirect electric lighting. This gives a glow of moderate intensity, supplemented by various ceiling fixtures in the galleries and by standards on the floor.

The main lobby is Roman in architectural character, in scale and detail harmonious with the motifs adopted for the Pennsylvania Station, but with a domestic note. Extensive use has been made of artificial marble made on a base of Keen's cement, applied to the walls and columns and finished by polishing in the same way that marble is worked. The floor of the main lobby is terrazzo, interest and distinction being added by using this material in combination with lines and borders of mosaic.

The bar room on the left of the main entrance has been treated in the Italian style, with artificial travertine walls, a vaulted plastered ceiling, wainscot of oak, and floor of tiles. The men's café to the right of the entrance is Georgian in feeling, executed in natural chestnut wood, panelled to the ceiling. The tea room is carried out in the spirit of the English work of the Adam period, but with free adaptation of the Italian sources of that style, rather than a close following of the Adam details.

In the main dining room there is also a distinctly Italian character, with wall base, and door trim of terra cotta, artificial limestone walls and a beamed ceiling which has been carefully studied in color to increase the apparent height of the room and has been treated to give the effect of the

old wooden beamed ceilings. Color is introduced in the draperies and lighting fixtures, against the warm neutral tones of the walls.

The ballroom, the foyer and the parlors which lead into it are likewise carried out in the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. In outline and decoration the ballroom shows a serious effort to preserve the traditions of the best examples of this period, and inspiration has been drawn from the

fresco decorations by Giovanni da Udine in the Villa Madama and the Vatican in Rome.

The large banquet room on the ballroom floor is treated with oak panelling, Italian in detail, to the ceiling, and the private dining rooms on this floor are treated with wooden mouldings and pilasters, Georgian in detail, applied to plastered walls. The grill room shows a distinct departure from the usual underground or rathskeller type. A bright and cheerful room that suggests the garden of a villa in the best Italian Renaissance manner is the result. It has a tile floor, terra cotta wainscot, and walls and piers of sgraffito and stucco.



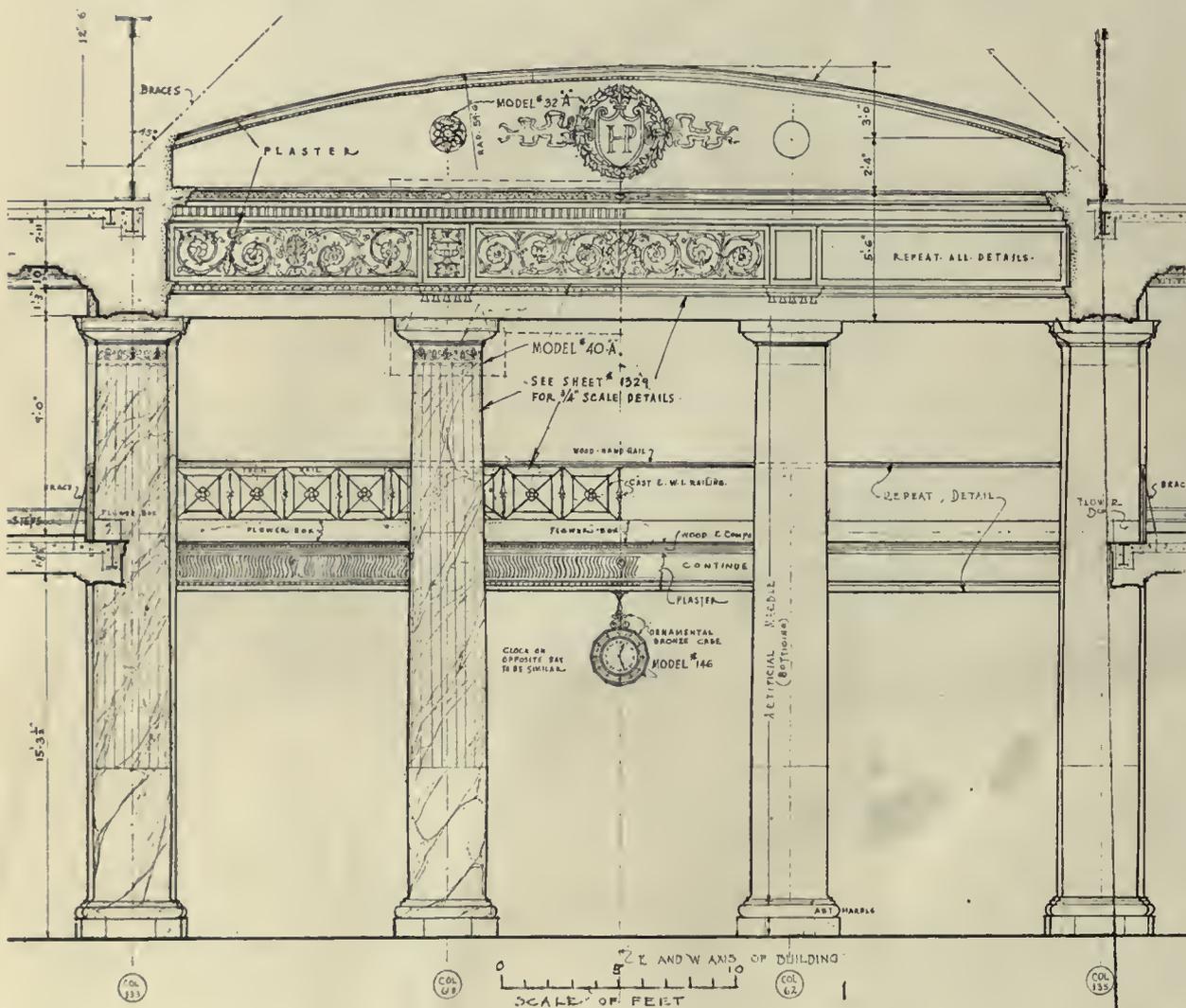
Central Feature, East Wall of Dining Room

In working out the color scheme of decorations the architects called into consultation the eminent artist, Jules Guérin, who was of the greatest assistance in producing a distinguished and harmonious result. The carpets, furniture and draperies were installed by the Hotels. Statler Company, Inc., who placed this work in the hands of Mr. Louis Rorimer of Cleveland. Mr. Rorimer has been in charge of the decoration and furnishing of the other Statler hotels. The architects have at the request of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company served in an advisory

capacity in regard to all the furnishings that went into the hotel. The architects have made an unusually interesting series of rooms by the use of Italian motives and their derivatives, found in the Adam and Georgian styles, applied as has always been the policy of the firm, with the purpose of fitting them closely to the solution of the problem in hand.

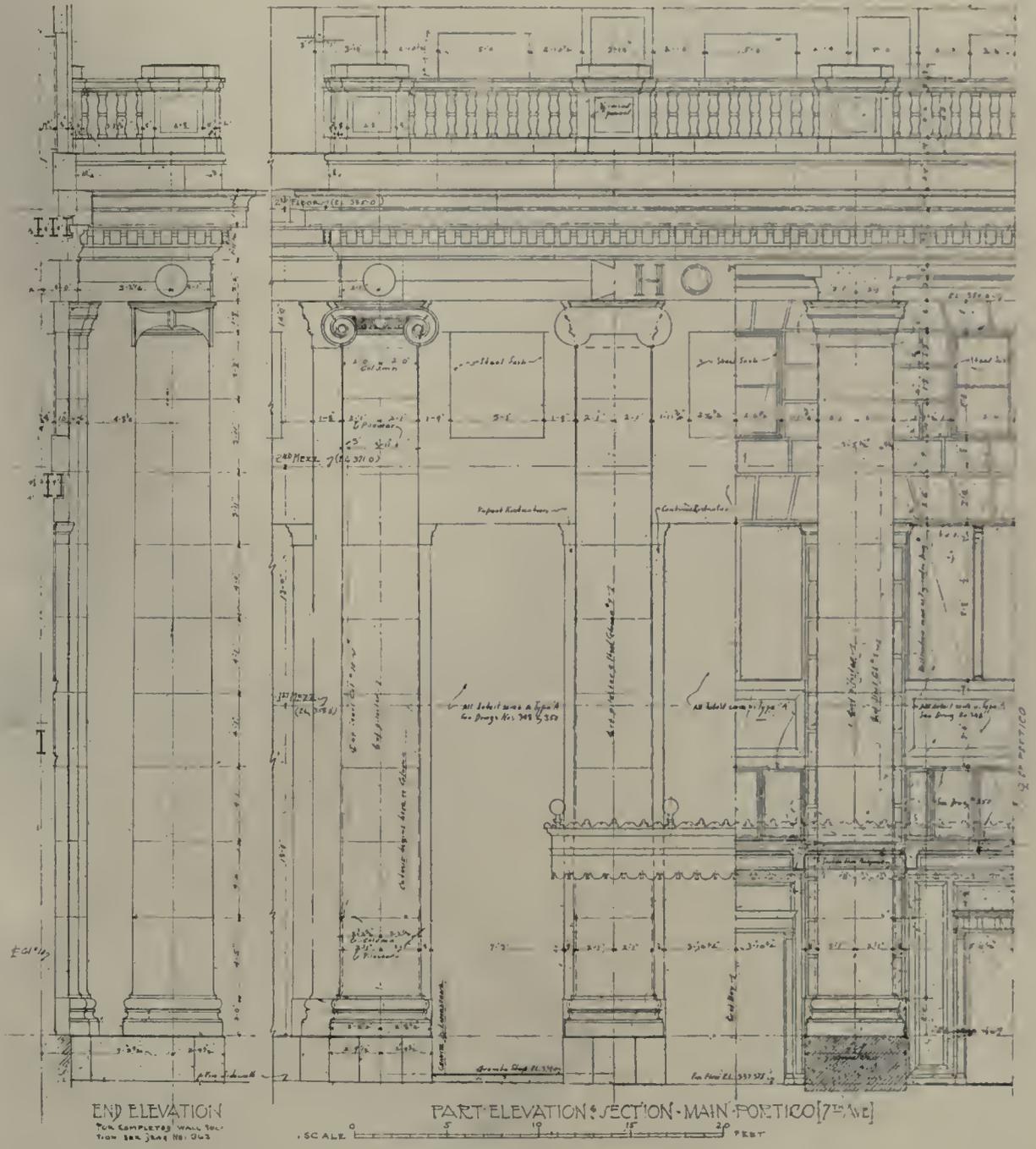
Though entirely different in the spirit of their decorative treatment, the interiors of these two new hotels that mark the latest development in interior architecture and furnishing for large hotel projects, are alike in the fact that color and ornament, furniture and furnishings have been chosen with the evident thought of producing an atmosphere quite different from that which we are accustomed to associating with the public rooms of large hotels. There is an absence of the familiar

tendency toward the pompous, over-rich and rigidly formal in both the treatment of the walls and ceilings and in the furnishings. This is a distinct improvement, for it brings to hotel decoration a new dignity which it could never have attained so long as ostentation was among its leading characteristics. This new tendency brings with it also an air of homelike comfort that contributes very largely to the satisfaction of the guest wearied by traveling, and does much to increase his esteem for the hotel. This has a business aspect for it means that guests are likely to become regular visitors stopping at the hotel whenever they are in town. At the same time that a homelike air has been introduced into the public rooms of these hotels, a high degree of dignity has, in general, been maintained and the sense of largeness of scale has in no wise been diminished.

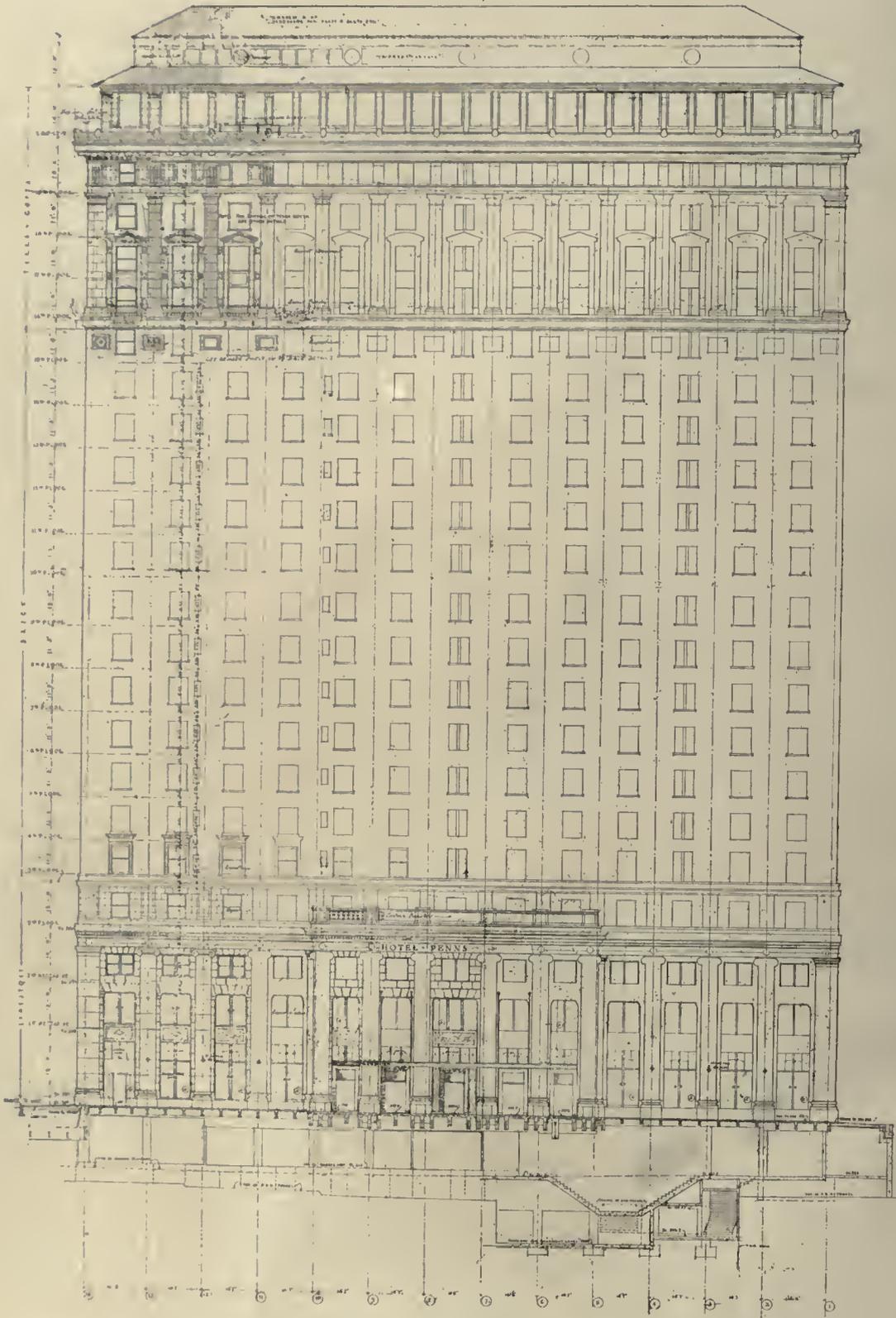


SECTION THRO' 33<sup>RD</sup> STREET ENTRANCE

Main Lobby



DETAILS OF SEVENTH AVENUE FACADE  
THE HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK  
McKIM, MEAD & WHITE, ARCHITECTS



SEVENTH AVENUE ELEVATION  
THE HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK

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