

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Bayard - Condict Building

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

65-69 Bleecker Street

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New York

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

18th

STATE

New York

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY

New York

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- \_\_\_ DISTRICT
- XX** BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_ SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- \_\_\_ PUBLIC
- XX** PRIVATE

\_\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- X** OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

- XX** YES: RESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

- \_\_\_ AGRICULTURE
- X** COMMERCIAL
- \_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ PARK
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Kerway Realty Company, Mr. Elgin Shulsky, President

STREET & NUMBER

307 Fifth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

New York

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New York County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

31 Chambers Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE

New York

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

HABS

DATE

1968

**X** FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

## CHECK ONE

## CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bayard-Condict Building rises 12 stories and is rectangular in plan. The Bleecker Street facade (facing south) is five bays wide. It rises from a concrete base, laid on sand and gravel with foundation walls of brick, 16 inches thick. The Bleecker Street facade is brick sheathed in white terra cotta, the sides and rear facades are of red brick laid up in common bond. The structural framing is a steel and cast iron skeletal system. The roof is flat with a heavy, projecting cornice below, richly ornamented with beautifully worked terra cotta and supported by six large angels with out-stretched arms.

Floor plans, by floor: First floor: Entranceway in most westerly bay opens into hall running north and south; near middle of hall are two passenger elevators; at rear is stairway; store to east of stairway. Second through 12 stories: Elevators and stairway in same position as on first floor; doors to offices and factory-spaces opposite and to south of elevator doors; rest of space variously divided for offices and factories.

Stairway: Metal fire stairway, painted black, has ornate balusters on basement, first, second and third floor levels; remainder of railing is simple.

Flooring: Floors in halls are covered with terrazzo; modern tile floors in factories and offices.

Doorways and doors: The entrance to the building is through double doors in the most westerly bay. The original doors have been replaced by modern metal and glass doors, but some of the original terra cotta ornament remains on the lunette over the doorway.

Windows and shutters: South (Bleecker Street) facade: First floor has modern plate glass windows. On the upper floors are pairs of two-over-two-light double-hung sash windows between richly ornamented terra cotta spandrels. At the 12 floor level, the bays are capped by large arches which spring between the piers; within each of the five arches is a kind of trefoil with terra cotta tracery. East (side) facade: Two-over-two-light double-hung sash windows, some with iron fire shutters.

Wall and ceiling finish: In the first floor hallway, walls are covered with plastic tiles and ceiling has modern acoustical tiles. Stairway halls have stucco and plaster walls and plaster ceiling, painted cream; office and factory walls and ceiling are plastered.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1897-1899 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Louis Sullivan (1856-1924)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bayard-Condict was the first building Sullivan designed after the dissolution of his partnership with Dankmar Adler (1895). Designed with Lyndon P. Smith, the building was one of the first skyscrapers in New York City and was considered highly controversial.

Standing on the north side of Bleecker Street, opposite Crosby Street, just off Broadway, "it is a twelve-story office building, steel-framed, and sheathed in terra cotta. The architectural scheme is fundamentally the same as that of the great skyscrapers prior to 1895, but it is most nearly akin to the unexecuted designs for the St. Louis Trust and Savings Bank. The treatment of the ground story, with display windows slanting back around columns at about two-thirds of their height, is the same as in the second of these designs. The alternation of heavy steel-bearing piers with lighter terra cotta mullions in the shaft of the building, and the decorated terra cotta spandrel panels and large arches connecting the main piers in the attic are almost identical with the corresponding features in the first of the Trust and Savings Bank designs. The chief difference is in the embellishment of the top story and attic by a kind of tracery in the heads of the large arches and the introduction of large figures of angles with outspread wings, rising from the primary piers to the cornice. Although Montgomery Schuyler remarks in defense of the fenestration and enrichment at the top of the building that the two top stories are internally one story, the upper floor being a gallery surrounding an open room two stories in height which is lighted from above, this fact hardly seems to justify the exterior treatment. The general effect is rich and exuberant, but it does not accord with the remainder of the design.

In spite of this infelicity, the Bayard Building was a prophetic apparition in New York; its freedom from historical preconceptions, its directness and fundamental simplicity made it far superior to its contemporaries and suggested the proper solution of the vexing problem of skyscraper design. Consequently it was the first of Sullivan's skyscrapers to be hailed by the Eastern critics, and we find it attracting more attention, due merely to its proximity, than had such landmarks as the Wainwright Building and the Schiller Building six and seven years before. Russell Sturgis, whose buildings of the late sixties had



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(HABS data sheets)

Montgomery Schuyler has used the building as an example:

"Very different is the aberration presented by the Bayard Building in Bleecker Street. There is nothing capricious in the general treatment of this structure. It is an attempt, and a very serious attempt, to found the architecture of a tall building upon the facts of the case. The actual structure is left or, rather, is helped, to tell its own story. This is the thing itself. Nobody who sees the building can help seeing that. Neither the analogy of the column, nor any other tradition or convention, is allowed to interfere with the task of clothing the steel frame in as expressive forms as may be. There is no attempt to simulate the breadth and massiveness proper to masonry in a frame of metal that is merely wrapped in masonry for its own protection. The flanking piers, instead of being broadened to the commercially allowable maximum, are attenuated to the mechanically allowable minimum. Everywhere the drapery of baked clay is a mere wrapping, which clings so closely to the frame as to reveal it, and even to emphasize it. This is true at least of the uprights, for it seems to me a defect in the general design, from the designer's own point of view, that it does not take enough account of the horizontal members. As anybody may see in a steel cage not yet concealed behind its screens of masonry, these are as important to the structure as the uprights. In the Bayard they are largely ignored, for the panels which mark the different floors are apparently mere insertions, answering no structural purpose, and there is no suggestion of any continuous horizontal members, such as, of course, exist and are even necessary to stability. Mr. Sullivan, some years ago, wrote a very interesting paper on the aesthetics of the tall building, of which the fundamental position was that form must follow function, and that "where function does not vary form does not vary." These are propositions from which nobody who believes that architecture is an art of expression will dissent, and with which the present writer heartily agrees. But in applying them to the case in question, Mr. Sullivan declared that the lower two (or possibly three) stories of a tall office building had a destination so different from that of the superstructure, that a distinguishing treatment for them was not only required but

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demanded, and that the uppermost story in turn, being in great part devoted to the "circulating system" of the building should also be differentiated. I remember suggesting to him that it was in fact only the ground floor which could be said to differ in function from its successors and that his inclusion of additional stories may have been inspired by an instinctive desire to obtain a base more proportional, according to our inherited notions of proportion, to a lofty superstructure than a single story could furnish. However that may be, in the Bayard it is the ground floor that is treated as the base. Even the second story "counts in" with the superstructure, to which logically it belongs. In spite of the separate treatment of the ground floor, the continuity of the structure is felt and expressed, even in the design of the capital, which are plainly not real capitals, spreading to carry a weight of greater area, but mere efflorescences of decoration. It is not a question whether two or three stories would not be more effectively proportional to the superstructure than one. It is a question of fact. The result, whatever else one may think of it, is a sense of reality very different from what we get from the sky-scrapers designed on conventional lines. It puts them to the same sort of shame to which the great roof trusses of the Manufacturers Building in Chicago put the imitative architecture with which they were associated. Not that the gauntness and attenuation of the resulting architecture are in this case altogether agreeable to an eye accustomed to the factitious massiveness of the conventional treatment. But, at the worst, this front recalls Rufus Choate's famous toast to the Chief Justice: "We look upon him as the East Indian upon his wooden idol. We know that he is ugly, but we feel that he is great." We feel that this front is a true and logical exposition of the structure. If we find it ugly notwithstanding, that may be our own fault. If we can find no failure in expressiveness, the architect may retort upon us that it is no uglier than it ought to be.

Meanwhile the aesthetic, as distinguished from the scientific, attractiveness of the Bayard Building without doubt resides in the decoration which has been lavished upon it, and which is of a quality that no other designer could have commanded. I am unable

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to agree with Mr. Sturgis's condemnation of the crowning feature of the building, in a recent number of this magazine, as "most unfortunate." In fact, the upper two stories are internally one story, the upper floor being a gallery surrounding a well extending through both, and lighted from above. Doubtless the arches and the rudimentary tracery are not forms of metallic architecture, but they do not belong to metallic architecture. The arches are in fact of brickwork, faced with terra cotta, and the thrust of them is visibly, as well as actually, taken up by the tie-rods at the springing. The intermediate uprights, the mullions, cease at this level, while the prolongation of the principal uprights is clearly denoted by the winged figures under the cornice. A designer who has adhered so strictly to the unpromising facts of the steel cage through eleven stories is scarcely to be severely blamed for "treating resolution" to this extent in the twelfth. If the building, apart from its wealth of decoration, recalls the works of contemporaneous engineering rather than of historical architecture, that also is "as it must be." The Bayard Building is the nearest approach yet made, in New York, at least, to solving the problem of the sky-scraper. It furnishes a most promising starting point for designers who may insist upon attacking that problem instead of evading it, and resting in compromises and conventions."<sup>2</sup>

There have been alterations and changes over the years--the main stairway, ceilings and office renovation.

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<sup>2</sup>Schuyler, Montgomery, American Architecture and Other Writings, Harvard University Press, 1961. pp.438-441

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also been prophetic, wrote in the Architectural Record: "There is here no pretense that the building is a massive structure of cut stone, and no pretense that it allows of treatment in the modern classical way with orders and with classical proportion. The whole front is a careful thinking-out of the problem, How to base a design upon the necessary construction in slender metal uprights and ties. Were it not for the most unfortunate treatment of each great opening between the uprights with an arch and a seeming system of tracery in the head, this front might be pointed to as completely realistic in design. Even as it is, if the reader will eliminate by a mental process these five great arches with their subordinate arches and the oculi which fill their heads, he will have the architectural treatment of the future metal building of our cities in the form which it must pass through if it is to reach any serious architectural success."<sup>1</sup>

The building stands today little appreciated by its tenants but suddenly and glowingly visible to those sensitive to its marvelous ornament.

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<sup>1</sup>Morrison, Hugh. Louis Sullivan, W. W. Norton and Company. pp. 192-193.

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Original and unpublished sources:

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Secondary and published sources:

"Bayard Building," Brickbuilder, VII (June, 1898), 127-28.

Burnham, Alan. New York Landmarks. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1963.

Bush-Brown, Albert. Louis Sullivan. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1960.

"The Condict Building," American Architect and Building News, LXX (October 6, 1900), pp. 7, 16.

Hamlin, Talbot F. "Sullivan Letters at Columbia," American Architect and Building News, MXLIX (November, 1936), 100-104.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. Architecture Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963.

Morrison, Hugh. Louis Sullivan, Prophet of Modern Architecture. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1935.

Schuyler, Montgomery. American Architecture and Other Writings. New York: Atheneum, 1964.

Sturgis, Russell. "Good Things in Modern Architecture," Architectural Record, VIII (July-September, 1898), 101.

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Photographs and Their Descriptions

Location: Bayard-Condict Building, New York, New York

Photo credit: Cervin Robinson, HABS, 1970

Photo description: 1. Top of building from south.

2. Entrance detail.

3. Cornice detail.