

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Tiffany and Company Building

AND/OR COMMON

Tiffany Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

401 Fifth Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New York

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

18

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

CODE

36

COUNTY

New York

CODE

061

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. Abraham Mindes

Also contact: James D. Muller  
Williams Real Estate  
1700 Broadway  
New York, N.Y. 10019

STREET & NUMBER

1464 Hammersley

CITY, TOWN

Bronx

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

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

360

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

According to Tiffany and Company tradition, when the firm began planning construction of a new store in 1903, President Charles Tiffany selected McKim, Mead, and White to design it, and following Tiffany's death that same year, his successor, Charles Cook, instructed the architects to "build me a palace."<sup>7</sup> Whatever the case, McKim, Mead, and White designed an almost exact copy of Venetian architect San Michele's 16th-century Palazzo Grimani. By the time it was completed in 1905, the edifice had cost more than \$600,000, excluding the lot. Tiffany had given \$2 million for it, then the most ever paid for a New York building site.

The west-facing, seven-story, fireproof structure rose on the southeast corner of 5th Avenue and 37th Street and displayed a shell of iron, white marble, and terra cotta. Fifth Avenue frontage extended 117 feet southward, while 37th Street frontage extended 152 feet eastward. From the outside the structure appeared to be only three stories high, but this was an illusion created by three tiers of windows. The store in fact stood taller than a modern 11-story building.

Seven bays deep and five bays wide, the structure enjoyed a continuity design on its two street facades. At the first-tier level each streetside bay was flanked by a pair of square, marble, Corinthian pillars resting on a marble base. Filling each bay was either a show window or a projecting brass portico holding a pair of revolving doors. A portico stood in each of the two end bays on the front, or west, facade, while on the north side one portico was fixed in the third bay from 5th Avenue and another in the fourth. Above each entrance portico or show window a marble spandrel braced the huge flanking pillars and formed a base for a fixed, metal-framed, six-light window. Above these openings a Corinthian entablature rested on the square pillars, passed across the facade, and supported a marble balustrade.

On the second and third tiers the facades were almost identical. Each bay featured a large window flanked by a pair of round Corinthian columns and was divided into two sections by a marble spandrel topped by a semicircular arch with ornamental keystone. The lower section displayed a metal-framed

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Purtell, The Tiffany Touch, 189.

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# 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 type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 1905-40 (1837-1950) BUILDER/ARCHITECT McKim, Mead, & White

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In their widely translated study of American retail institutions, authors Tom Mahoney and Leonard Sloane state that "no other store has so much impressed itself on [American] business" as has Tiffany and Company, the "most famous jewelry store in the world." The greatest accolade that any company can earn, assert Mahoney and Sloane, "is to be called the Tiffany of its industry."<sup>1</sup> Although it is neither the oldest nor the largest jewelry store in the United States, "for half a century," says biographer Alvin F. Harlow, "Tiffany was considered the leader of the jewelry trade in America."<sup>2</sup> Certainly since 1848 when the 11-year-old firm acquired and offered for sale a portion of the French crown jewels, it has been consistently foremost among American establishments in designing, manufacturing, and selling not only jewelry but silverware, glassware, china, and fine stationery as well. The Tiffany ring setting and the Tiffany safety catch for jewelry are but two of the company's contributions to the vocabulary of jewelers.

During the second half of the 19th century the press hailed founder Charles Lewis Tiffany as a tastemaker and a "teacher of art progress," and his numerous international honors and long list of elite customers--including the U. S. Government, several American Presidents, and many members of the European royalty--supported these claims.<sup>3</sup> As early as 1845 Tiffany adopted the  
(continued)

<sup>1</sup> Tom Mahoney and Leonard Sloane, The Great Merchants: America's Foremost Retail Institutions and the People Who Made Them Great. Updated edition (New York, 1966), 49, 54.

<sup>2</sup> Alvin F. Harlow, "Charles Lewis Tiffany," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. IX, Part 2 (New York, 1936), 533.

<sup>3</sup> New York Post, quoted in Joseph Purtell, The Tiffany Touch (New York, 1973), 96. (362)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Harlow, Alvin F., "Charles Lewis Tiffany," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. IX, Part 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 533.

(continued)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>18</u>	<u>58,600,00</u>	<u>4,511,130,00</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the boundary of the legal lot known as 401 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

George R. Adams, Director

December 1976

ORGANIZATION

DATE

American Association for State & Local History

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1400 Eighth Avenue South

615-242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Nashville

Tennessee

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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window with six vertical parts in two rows of three, each part having three vertical rows of four vertical lights. In the upper sections the windows also consisted of six vertical parts in two rows of three, but each part had three rows of only two vertical lights. On both tiers the windows of the upper sections were situated behind the decorative arches; the spandrels of the arches were open on tier two and closed with marble on tier three.

Between tiers two and three an entablature, supported by the columns flanking the windows, crossed the facade. Above tier three a massive Corinthian entablature and cornice topped the structure. Nowhere on the building was the Tiffany name displayed. Only "Atlas" and his clock, affixed to the second-tier balcony in the center of the front facade, identified the pile.

Sometime after Tiffany and Company sold the building, probably during a major renovation in 1952, the original show windows and entrances were removed from the lower portion of the first tier, as were the marble spandrels and terra cotta pillar capitals on that tier, and modern shop fronts were installed. A new entrance to the upper floors was constructed in the seventh bay on the 37th Street facade. Except for these alterations and the transferral of "Atlas" and his clock to the present store, however, all other areas of the building's street facades are unchanged.

Originally, the interior of the store was decorated generally in gray tones; the main-floor ceiling was covered with aluminum and supported by purplish-marble pillars; and some walls were made of teakwood bordered with polished steel and brass, while others were ornamented with formosa marble.<sup>8</sup> None of this decor has survived. Apparently most was destroyed during the 1952 renovation when more than 10 tons of bronze was removed from the structure. Now the main floor has given way to various shops, and a new second story has been added between the ground floor and the former second story, giving the building eight floors. Ceilings have been lowered throughout the upper floors, but most either remain free of partitions or have only temporary ones. Only the top floor exhibits an element of its initial charm.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 192-93.

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Its large, oval, stained-glass skylight has been removed, but its Corinthian-column-supported, vaulted, marble ceiling is intact.

Allied Stores, Inc., occupied the upper floors from about 1952 until recently. For the past several months this portion of the structure has been vacant, and the edifice has been in receivership. Apparently still structurally sound, it currently is being advertised for sale by Williams Real Estate, 1700 Broadway, New York, New York, 10019.

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British sterling silver standard, forcing his competitors eventually to accept it too and the Congress to write it into law, and in the 1850's Tiffany and his factory director, Edward Moore, developed a still-used mass production method of shaping hand-finished silverware. In addition Tiffany and Company contributed significantly to international mineralogy and revived the interest of both collectors and purchasers in semiprecious stones for jewelry by employing and supporting the work of mineralogist George Frederick Kunz who gained worldwide recognition in his field.

Like many well-established New York retail firms, Tiffany and Company has occupied several locations over the years, moving farther and farther uptown in Manhattan as population and shopping trends dictated. There are no known extant Charles Tiffany residences, but three commercial and industrial structures survive in the New York vicinity: the Tiffany silver factory, completed in Newark in 1897; Tiffany's present store, erected in 1937; and this originally seven-story edifice, which the company planned before Charles Tiffany's death, completed in 1905 at the corner of 5th Avenue and 37th Street, and occupied until 1937. Designed by McKim, Mead, and White, the iron, marble, and terra cotta structure is a copy of Venetian architect San Michele's 16th-century Palazzo Grimani. Today modern storefronts mar the former beauty of the building's first-story facades, but elsewhere the exterior of the structurally sound edifice is little changed. Much of the interior has been temporarily or permanently partitioned for office and shop space, but the marble-vaulted top floor, although in disrepair, remains open and recalls more glamorous times. The Tiffany vault remains in the basement.

History

Tiffany and Company has been in business since 1837, when cofounder Charles Lewis Tiffany and his partner John B. Young opened a small stationery and "fancy goods" shop in the first floor of a lower Broadway residence. Tiffany was only 25 at the time. Born on February 15, 1812, in Killingly, Conn., he attended common schools, spent 2 years at a private academy in Plainfield, and at age 15 took charge of a general store owned by his father, a textile manufacturer. During the next few years young Tiffany completed his education at Plainfield and began to think about starting his own business in New York City. Eventually he rejected, at least temporarily, an opport-

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unity to enter into partnership with his father and instead borrowed money from him and journeyed to New York with Young.

From the beginning Tiffany and Young stocked unusual items: Chinese goods, Japanese papier-mâché and terra cotta ware, umbrellas, fans, fine stationery, pottery, and novel bric-a-brac. Sales began slowly, but Tiffany proved a talented advertiser and merchandiser. By 1839 the two entrepreneurs had moved to a larger space next door and begun to sell mostly glassware, clocks, and jewelry. About this same time, a period in which merchandise in most stores went unmarked and was sold generally at the highest price the customer would pay, Tiffany and Young adopted the one-price system. Their business continued to grow, and in 1841 Tiffany married Young's sister, Harriet Olivia, and the firm took a third partner, J. L. Ellis. That same year Young made the first company trip to Europe, to buy porcelain, cutlery, clocks, and jewelry. He brought back and successfully marketed jewelry made with false diamonds, leading Tiffany to believe that the store could enjoy the same success with real stones. By 1845 Tiffany and Young offered only genuine diamonds and other goods that Tiffany considered high in quality.

The next few years were perhaps even more decisive in the firm's future. In 1847 the partners moved their store once again and published the company's first annual catalog. Besides jewelry, clocks, and stationery, it listed chessmen, tea sets, dinner sets, cuspidors, bronzes, French furniture, parasols, and fancy garters. Tiffany, Young, and Ellis first attracted national attention in 1848. Accompanied by his assistant, Thomas Banks, Young traveled to Europe on another buying junket and reached France just in time for the revolution against Louis Philippe. With members of the French nobility anxious during the ensuing economic chaos to trade their diamonds for ready cash, Young and Banks invested all their funds in the gems and returned to the United States with merchandise that included Marie Antoinette's bejeweled girdle and other pieces that formerly belonged to the French crown. How the two men obtained royal items remains a mystery. In any case, upon their arrival in this country Charles Tiffany encouraged the press in its excited coverage of the event, and soon he became known as the "King of Diamonds." He and his partners now opened a branch store in Paris, and it grew as rapidly as the one in New York.

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By 1850 California gold had begun to arrive in New York, and Tiffany, Young, and Ellis was ready with merchandise for the newly rich. The firm gave special attention to items of sterling silver and exerted a lasting impact upon the manner and quality of their manufacture in the United States. For some time Tiffany had admired the work of John Chandler Moore, perhaps the best silver craftsman in the country, and now he contracted with Moore to supply Tiffany, Young, and Ellis exclusively. Tiffany also instructed Moore to make his silverware as pure as English sterling. This forced Tiffany's competitors to upgrade their metal, and eventually the British standard, sometimes called the Tiffany standard in the United States, was written into U.S. law. It remains in effect today. About this same time Tiffany and Moore developed a mass production method of shaping basic silver items, but their finishing work continued to be done by hand. The firm still uses the Tiffany-Moore technique.

In 1853 Young and Ellis left the company, and Tiffany and Gideon Reed, who had joined the organization as a partner in 1848, changed its name to Tiffany and Company. They also moved the store to new quarters at 550 Broadway, where they installed above the front door "Atlas," a 9-foot-high figure carved from wood by Henry Frederick Metzler to bear the store's master clock. "Atlas" and his clock became a Tiffany symbol, and they have adorned every subsequent Tiffany store in New York, including the present one at 5th Avenue and 57th Street.

Other Tiffany advertising in the 1850's proved much less utilitarian. For example, following the much publicized execution of a celebrated killer elephant belonging to P. T. Barnum, Tiffany bought the body, had it skinned, displayed the hide in a show window, and took orders for leather goods to be made from the trophy. Tiffany and Company also turned out commemorative silver for Jinny Lind and the wedding of Barnum midgets General Tom Thumb and Lavina Warren and sold certified souvenir lengths of the first Atlantic cable.

Tiffany and Company gained more national attention during the Civil War. Through the firm's Paris office Charles Tiffany obtained models of armaments from the French Army and the leading manufacturers of Europe, and then he produced and sold military

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swords, guns, and other supplies. Especially popular were Tiffany's commemorative swords, which his craftsmen turned out by the hundreds. Two particularly well-designed ones went to Gen. Ulysses Grant and Adm. David Farragut, winners of a most-popular-officer contest that Tiffany and Company sponsored to raise money for the New York Sanitary Commission.

When the war ended, Charles Tiffany launched construction of a new store building at Union Square and 15th Street, and in 1868 his firm merged with John Chandler Moore's Silverware Company. The name Tiffany and Company was retained, and Tiffany became the first president. Over the next two decades the firm earned an international reputation in design. While the New York press hailed the new store as "the largest of its kind in the world," Tiffany began to concentrate on winning recognition from his peers.<sup>4</sup> At the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, his merchandise won the gold metal, and 2 years later at the Paris Exposition he took the grand prize for silver and a gold metal for jewelry. Afterward he received the Cross of Chevalier of the Legion of Honor from France and the Pramia Digna, a gold metal of honor, from Russia. Soon Tiffany and Company's list of customers, which held the names of several American presidents, included the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Leopold, Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, and a host of other members of the European nobility. In 1883 the firm was designated jeweler to Queen Victoria, and within a year similar appointments followed from the Czar and Czarina; the Emperor of Austria; the kings of Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Rumania; the Khedive of Egypt; and the Shah of Persia.

Additional fame accrued to Tiffany and Company as a result of the work of George Frederick Kunz, a mineralogist who joined the firm in 1879. Kunz traveled throughout the world in search of gems for Tiffany, as well as for private collector J. Pierpont Morgan, the Metropolitan Museum, and the American Museum of

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<sup>4</sup>

New York Times, quoted in Purtell, The Tiffany Touch, 58.

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Natural History. By the early 20th century Kunz had written numerous books about minerals and become widely acknowledged as dean of the world's gem experts. His discoveries included tiffanyite and morganite, which he named for his chief supporters. His own name is attached to kunzite.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, by the 1880's Tiffany and Company had become, as Mahoney and Sloane point out, "the most famous jewelry store in the world."<sup>6</sup> The Tiffany Diamond, found in the Kimberly mines of South Africa in 1877, attracted global attention, and the Tiffany ring setting gained wide popularity in the United States. In 1883 and again in 1887 Tiffany and Company purchased several auction lots of French crown jewels, and for years the firm's annual diamond sales totaled more than \$6 million. Sales of pearls, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires accounted for at least that much more. This was the "Gilded Age" in America, and Tiffany and Company both encouraged and helped enable the rich to showcase their wealth.

Charles Tiffany was the first and last Tiffany to head the firm. When he died of pneumonia on February 18, 1902, vice-president Charles T. Cook succeeded him. Before his death Tiffany had launched plans for a new store and selected architects McKim, Mead, and White to design it. Cook carried the plan forward, and in 1905 the company moved into a palace-like building at the corner of 5th Avenue and 37th Street.

During the next two decades Tiffany and Company operated on its usual grand scale, but in 1930 the firm fell victim to the Great Depression and lost money for the first time. Although losses continued to plague the company through the ensuing decade, the directors decided in 1937 to invest in a new building still farther uptown. Three years later Tiffany and Company moved into its present headquarters, a relatively plain, seven-story, granite and limestone structure with little  
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<sup>5</sup> Purtell, The Tiffany Touch, 71ff.

<sup>6</sup> Mahoney and Sloane, The Great Merchants, 49.

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ornamentation. The firm fared better in the mid-1940's, showing a profit of just over \$1 million in 1946, but by 1949 earnings dropped below \$20,000.

In 1955 several entrepreneurs competed for control of Tiffany and Company, and Walter Hoving, president of Hoving Corporation, emerged the victor. During the next 15 years he completely revitalized the firm by opening branches in San Francisco, Beverly Hills, Chicago, and Houston; starting a trophy design department; buying French-born Jean Schlumberger's business and bringing him to work for Tiffany and Company; employing Van Day Treuex, formerly president of the Parson School of Design, to oversee the china and silver departments; and stepping up promotion. Today Tiffany and Company is once again a pace-setter in American design.

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Mahoney, Tom and Leonard Sloane, The Great Merchants: America's Foremost Retail Institutions and the People Who Made Them Great. Updated edition (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966).

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Purtell, Joseph, The Tiffany Touch (New York: Pocket Books, 1973). Published originally by Random House in 1971.

Wentzel, Paul and Maurice Krakow, A Monograph on the Work of McKim, Mead, and White, 1879-1915. Vol. III, Part 2 (New York: The Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1915).

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