

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Flatiron Building
other names/site number Fuller Building

2. Location

street & number Fifth Avenue, Broadway and 23rd Street not for publication
city, town New York vicinity
state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10010

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Business

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
office building

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Renaissance Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation steel frame covered wth stone
walls limestone & brick
terra-cotta

roof _____

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Flatiron Building has often been compared to a ship sailing up Broadway anchored at Madison Square among the vestiges of the 19th-century commercial building boom. Looking south down Broadway from the Square is the Ladies Mile Historic District, the complex of structures of the boom years following the Civil War and into the early 20th century. It was the golden mile of great shops and department stores, including Wanamakers, Tiffanys, Arnold Constables, and Lord and Taylor, that terminated at Union Square and East 17th Street.

One of New York City's most individual early skyscrapers, the Flatiron Building rises twenty-one stories from a triangular lot. Bounded on the south by Twenty-Second Street, on the west by Fifth Avenue and on the east by Broadway, the structure fills the lot and measures 85 feet on the south, 200 feet on Fifth Avenue and 300 feet along the Broadway facade. The Flatiron is a steel skeleton sheathed in limestone and brick with fine terra cotta ornamentation covering the "skin" of the structure. The Broadway and Fifth Avenue facades are identical while the 22nd Street facade is somewhat simpler below the cornice line.

The exterior of the Flatiron Building is divided into three sections: base, shaft, and capital. The lower five floors comprise the base and are in turn divided into three sections by heavy stone entablatures. The centers of both the Fifth Avenue and Broadway facades are each highlighted by a double story, arched entrance surrounded by engaged columns supporting a full entablature. These columns and the colossal pilasters which separate the display windows on the first two floors are of alternating blocks of smooth-faced and patterned stone. The third and fourth stories are simpler with piers and spandrels of rusticated limestone while the first story is heavily ornamented with abstract floral motifs and medallions containing masks or fleur de lys.

The twelve story shaft is covered on much of its surface by richly decorated terra-cotta, although some piers are faced in plain brick. The planes of the Broadway and Fifth Avenue facades are interrupted by three vertical rows, eight stories high, of heavily ornamented oriel windows.

The capital of the building, from the 18th floor to the 21st, is again divided into three sections by protruding stone entablatures. The decoration of the eighteenth floor includes fleur de lys and decorated panels. The next section consists of heavily ornamented, two-story

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D NHL #4

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1901

1901

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Burnham, Daniel Hudson

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Daniel Burnham was one of the most prolific and sought-after architects in late nineteenth-century America. As the Director of a large office of design professionals, he was responsible for a multitude of buildings as well as designs for expositions and the planning of large cities. The evolution of both the Chicago and New York skyscraper styles owed much to Daniel Burnham and he left an indelible mark on both. The Fuller or "Flatiron" building is one of his most eloquent Classical tall buildings. For 10 years acclaimed as the world's tallest building, the crisp, thin tower dominates Broadway at Madison Square. It is the symbol of the energy and imagination of architects who were reshaping American cities in the early 20th century.

Both New York and Chicago were the sites of pioneering efforts in the development of the tall building and both cities produced an individual style. Daniel Burnham figured in the evolution of the elegant, stripped down Chicago style and later the ceremonial, neo-Roman temples atop steel frames. Toward the end of his career, the facile architect could supply them both with equal skill and did so on a number of occasions.

The Flatiron in New York was one of the first multi-storied buildings in America to represent Louis Sullivan's ideal of a "proud and soaring thing" rather than a prosaic stack of floors containing as much floor space as the law would allow. Sullivan's poetic philosophy of skyscraper design insisted that the idea of sheer verticality was elemental, that the building should be a free standing tower full of light and air, and be a commercial symbol full of power and romance.

Burnham's Flatiron has stood free on its island since 1902--one of the most romantic and photogenic of the early skyscrapers. The triangular site is the intersection of an old road, Broadway, and the 1811 grid laid on Manhattan

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

A

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4	5	1	0	3	2	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 851, Lot 1

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is that City lot historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn Pitts, Historian
 organization History Division, NPS date 2/9/89
 street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8166
 city or town Washington state DC zip code 20013

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

arcaded windows. The small, square windows of the top story are surmounted by the projecting heavy entablature of the roof which is decorated with a dentil pattern. Capping the entire building is a stone balustrade, with squat piers interspersed throughout its length.¹

The interior of the Flatiron building is considerably less ornate and has been remodeled to suit individual tenants. On the ground floor, there is an original open iron and marble stair and a decorative letter box in the lobby. The lobby floor is currently undergoing restoration.

Footnotes

1. National Register Form, New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1966.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

streets. At the building's base is Madison Square Park, at the time of the Flatiron's construction, one of the most fashionable residential and commercial sections of the city. During the 1890's, the "Four Hundred" dined nearby at Delmonico's and attended the exhibitions, conventions, circuses, and entertainments at Stanford White's Madison Square Garden (1890), capped by a tower that looked like the Giralda in Seville, which supported St. Gaudens' weather vane in the form of the scantily clad Goddess, Diana. (Ironically, White died in the Roof Garden from a gunshot wound inflicted by Harry Thaw.)

The Garden is now gone and Diana rests in the Philadelphia Museum, but there are vestiges of an earlier, more elegant commercial district surrounding the Flatiron Building. The Metropolitan Life Insurance building with its campanile-like tower reminiscent of Venice; Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building, a "Cathedral of Commerce" with its Gothic ornament; the Singer Sewing Machine headquarters of 1908, by Ernest Flagg (demolished in 1968); and the elegant shopping area called "Ladies Mile," where one could find B. Altman, Arnold Constable, Lord and Taylor and Tiffany and Company. As the city developed, the "Avenoodles," as the rich residents were called, moved uptown and brownstones were replaced by lively commercial structures, many designed by distinguished architects.

Burnham's Flatiron was originally the Fuller Building, commissioned by the well-known Chicago contractors who executed many of the architect's designs. The (The Fuller Construction Company moved from the Flatiron in 1929 to repair to a new site in New York City. They built a conservative structure whose shape would not replace its corporate name in the public mind.)

Daniel Hudson Burnham was one of the most important late 19th-century architects in America. Born in New York state, he moved, as a boy, with his family, to Chicago in 1854. His formal architectural training began under William LeBaron Jenney and later he served as a draftsman in the firm of Carter, Drake and Wight, where he met John Wellborn Root. Root had studied engineering at New York University and had worked in the New York offices of Renwick and Sands and J.B. Snook before leaving for Chicago in 1872. Root, along with Louis Sullivan, was a leading practitioner of architectural design incorporating rich and expressive ornament. Burnham and Root formed a partnership in 1873, and, although unlike in temperament, they produced such major buildings as the Montauk Block, The Rookery and the first section of the Monadnock building, all in Chicago. This successful partnership designed 165 private homes and 75 various other structures and ended suddenly when John Root died in 1891.

In 1890 the World's Columbian Exposition was incorporated in Chicago with John Root as Consulting Architect, Mr. Burnham, Chief of Construction, and the firm of F.L. Olmsted & Company, Landscape Architects. As time went on individual architects or firms were selected to design specific buildings, including: Burling & Whitehouse, Jenney & Mundie, Henry I.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Cobb, S.S. Berman and Adler & Sullivan, of Chicago; Richard M. Hunt, New York; George B. Post and McKim, Mead & White, of New York; Peabody & Stearns, of Boston; and Van Brunt & Howe, of Kansas City. The sudden death of Mr. Root in 1891 further increased Burnham's responsibilities and made the task of completing plans for the opening of the Exposition in 1893 seem almost impossible. However, it was accomplished, and through his personal efforts alone.

From 1891 to 1896 Mr. Burnham practiced alone, subsequently the firm of D.H. Burnham & Company was organized with the following members: Ernest R. Graham, E.C. Shanklin and Charles Atwood, with Mr. Burnham head of the firm until his death in 1912.¹

In 1901, Burnham was appointed to the McMillan Commission to plan the enlargement and extension of the L'Enfant plan for the city of Washington. He chose Charles McKim, New York architect and Frederick Olmsted, Jr., landscape architect for the Commission. This new phase of his career, city planning, brought him fame and commissions from San Francisco, Cleveland, Detroit and his native Chicago. He also headed a planning commission to the Philippines. In 1910, President Taft appointed him Chairman of Washington, D.C.'s, newly formed National Commission of Fine Arts. One of his tasks was selecting the architect and siting the Lincoln Memorial.

Burnham died in his 69th year while travelling in Europe and is buried in Evanston, Illinois. The Architectural Record (1912) contains eulogies by Cass Gilbert, Peter B. Wight, President William Howard Taft, William Holabird and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Burnham's true genius was in understanding the late Victorian mania for bigness-- which Louis Sullivan summed up in his Autobiography:

During this period there was well under way the formation of mergers, combinations and trusts in the industrial world. The only architect in Chicago to catch the significance of this movement was Daniel Burnham, for in its tendency toward bigness, organization, delegation, and intense commercialism, he sensed the reciprocal workings of his own mind.²

Daniel Burnham was the mid-point between the managers and general contractors and was called a "Captain of Architecture." The Flatiron building was gargantuan compared to its surroundings in 1901 with its huge-scaled Classical ornament.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

The Flatiron Building was also the most often reproduced post-card image of New York, along with the Statue of Liberty and the Brooklyn Bridge. The artist-photographer, Alfred Stieglitz, recorded it in its many moods, describing it as the bow of a monster ocean liner--a picture of a new America still in the making. It was also the origin of an American catch phrase due to the wind caused by the sharp corner at Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street. Young men gathered at the site for a glimpse of a woman's ankle--as the police shouted "twenty-three skidoo."

Footnotes:

- 1 Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970), p. 97, 314.
- 2 Louis Sullivan, The Autobiography of an Idea (New York: American Institute of Architects, 1924), p. 30.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

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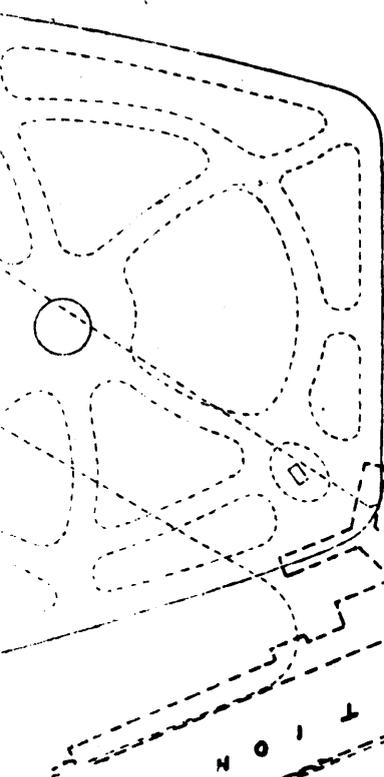
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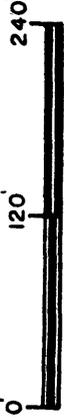
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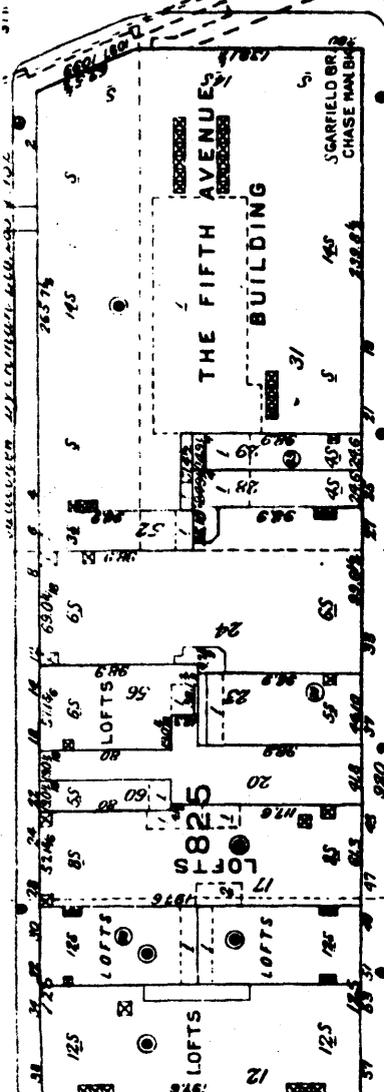
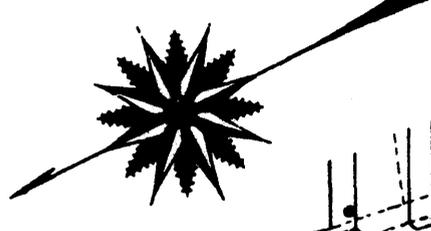


PART OF SECTION 3

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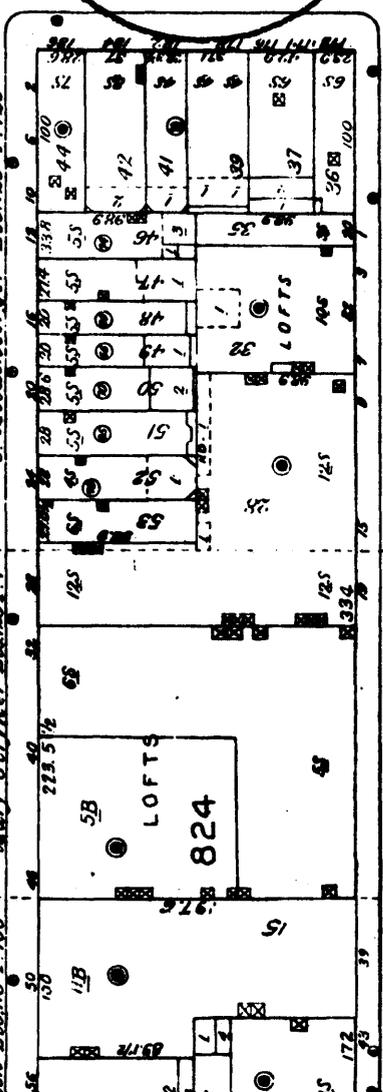


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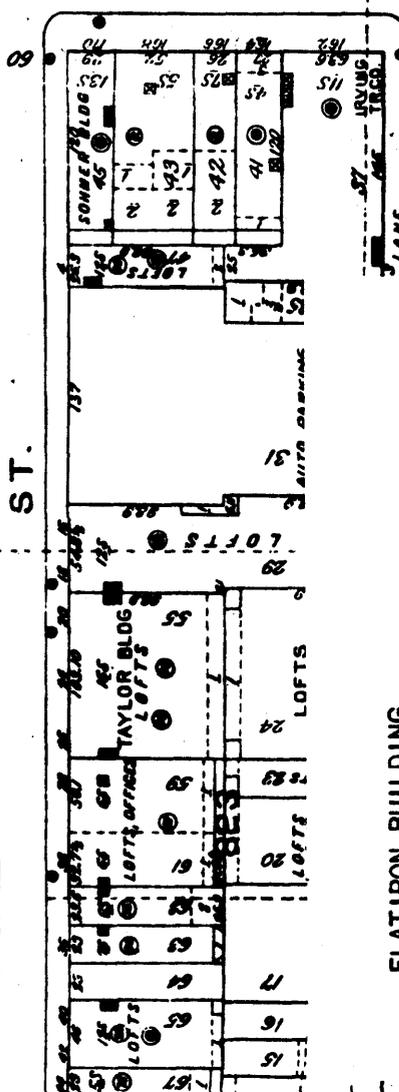


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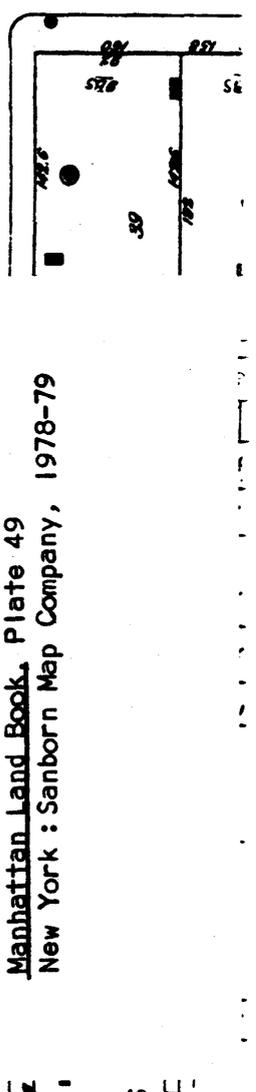
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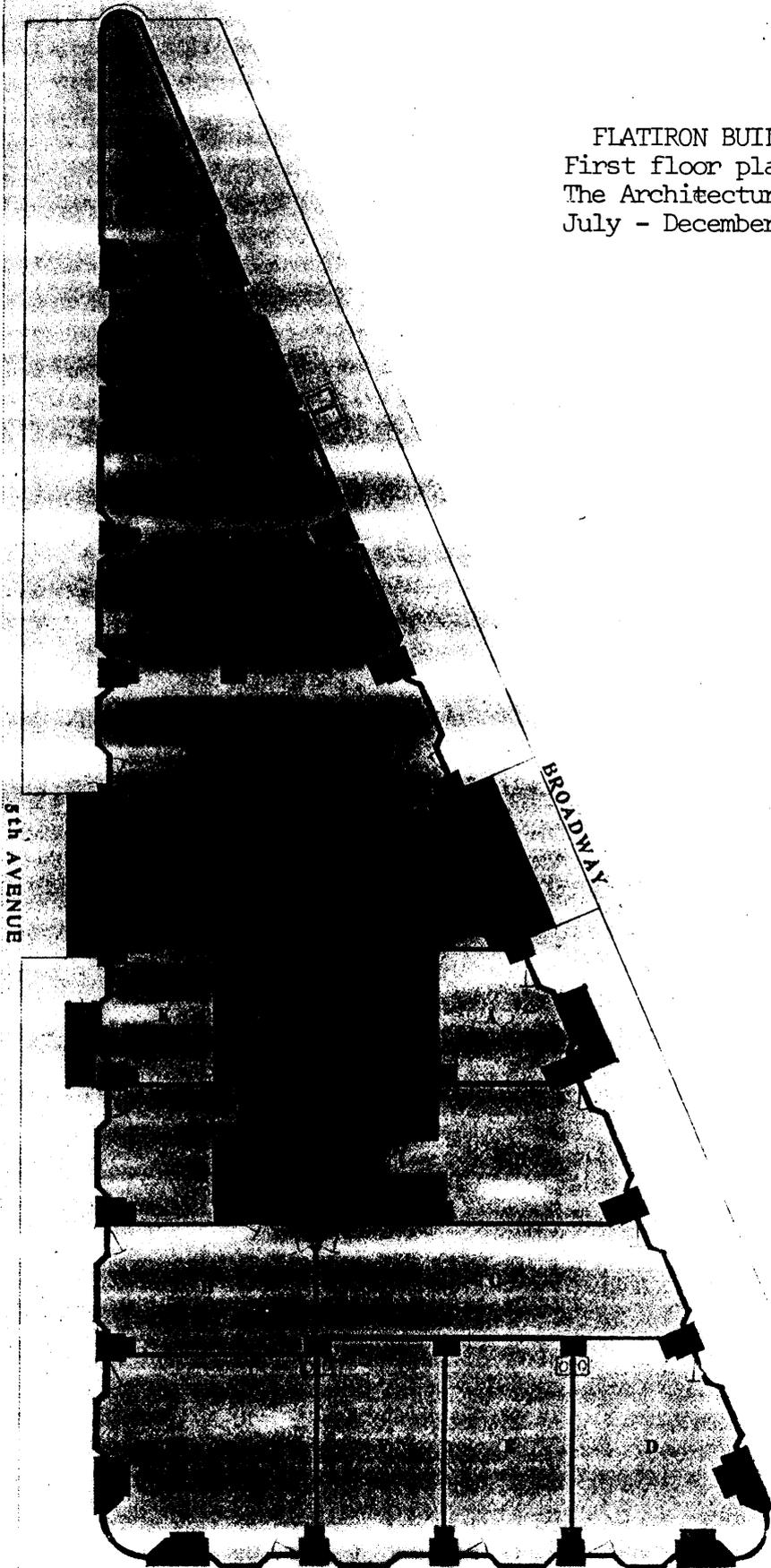


ST.



FLATIRON BUILDING
New York County, New York
Manhattan Land Book, Plate 49
New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1978-79

23rd STREET



FLATIRON BUILDING
First floor plan Page 60
The Architectural Record
July - December, 1915

