

18 EAST 41ST STREET

(AKA 18-20 East 41st Street), Manhattan
Tax Map Block 1275, Lot 61

Built: 1912-14

Architect: George + Edward Blum

Style: Neo-Gothic

Actions: Item Proposed for the Commission's Calendar on May 10, 2016

Completed in 1914, 18 East 41st Street is an early neo-Gothic skyscraper. Located between Fifth and Madison Avenues in Manhattan, the slender main façade displays striking white, beige and blue terracotta ornamentation. An early work by the noted New York City architects George & Edward Blum, it was most likely the firm's first commercial commission. Built when Grand Central Terminal was nearing completion, this building is a representative of the earliest evolution in skyscraper development in East Midtown, prior to the passage of the 1916 zoning.

Twenty-one stories tall, the building rises without setbacks. The alteration of thick and thin piers creates a strong vertical emphasis that recalls the pioneering skyscrapers of Louis Sullivan, while the sumptuous terracotta embellishment suggests the influence of both medieval and modern sources, from European cathedrals to contemporary designs by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Josef Hoffmann. Architecture critic H. W. Frohe admired the Blum's design, calling it an "artistic advance in the building of our time." Though the base has been respectfully modified, most of the façade is unchanged, particularly the ornate upper stories, which incorporate sculpted window frames, distinctive grid patterns, pointed arches, and angled projections.



Built during the era when Grand Central Terminal was nearing completion, the building attracted a great variety of tenants, from private clubs and publishers to doctors and architects. A five-room penthouse apartment was originally located on the roof. Designed to recall a bungalow-type residence, it was leased to the Broadway actor Donald Brian and movie director Dudley Murphy, as well as a speakeasy, which was closed by the prohibition agents in 1932. A major work by George & Edward Blum, 18 East 41st Street is among midtown's first and finest early 20th century skyscrapers.

