250 Cabrini boulevard

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

Prepared by
Anthony W. Robins
for 250 Cabrini Boulevard, Inc.

October 2011

Summary

No. 250 Cabrini Boulevard – originally known as 250 Northern Avenue – occupies a prominent corner at West 187th Street in Washington Heights in upper Manhattan. It was commissioned by Manhattan developer Samuel Minskoff, and built in 1936-37 to designs by the firm of Boak & Paris.

Thanks to the opening of subway lines connecting the neighborhood to the lower city, Washington Heights developed in the early 20th century as a residential neighborhood of six-story apartment buildings. The apartment buildings of the 1920s tended to use typically eclectic designs modeled on historic European styles like the Tudor or the Italian Renaissance. In the 1930s, however, following trends in the larger city, the architects designing new buildings in the neighborhood – especially west of Broadway – turned to the newly modern styles today known as "Art Deco."

Sam Minskoff, founder of a major Manhattan real-estate dynasty, worked in the 1920s with architect Emery Roth, in whose office he likely met the young architects Russell Boak and Hyman Paris. After Boak and Paris left Roth's office in 1927 to form their own partnership, Minskoff became one of their most frequent clients, a relationship continued by their successor firms into the 1960s. While Boak & Paris's early work reflected the typical eclectic borrowings of the late 1920s, the architects quickly developed a very personal version of Art Deco. Their work from the 1930s – while clearly part of that architectural trend – is instantly recognizable and distinguishable from the mass of other comparable Art Deco apartment buildings.

No. 250 Cabrini Boulevard stands out from its neighbors because it is taller than the typical six-story Washington Heights apartment building, and because its design differs from those of neighboring buildings, which resemble comparable apartment buildings in the West Bronx designed by the same group of architects in the same years. The variegated brick, abstract geometric cast-stone ornament, and handsome metal detailing, as well as the red Verona marble surrounding the main entrance, make No. 250 one of the most unusual Art Deco designs in the neighborhood, as well as one of the most visible because of its location at a prominent intersection. The building survives almost entirely intact, with the exception of its windows, and recently completed a major restoration of its lobby. Now the corporation proposes to replace the existing aluminum non-historic windows with a combination of wood double-hung windows and corner casement windows, replicating as much as possible with modern materials the original design of Boak & Paris.

Washington Heights

Washington Heights, one of two neighborhoods in upper Manhattan north of Harlem (the other being Inwood), takes its name from Fort Washington, erected by the Continental Congress during the American Revolutionary War roughly on the site of today's Bennett Park near Fort Washington Avenue.

Like many New York neighborhoods, Washington Heights has imprecise boundaries. The larger neighborhood stretches from the Harlem River to the Hudson, and from West 155th Street to Dyckman Street. Within that area, the hilly section north of West 181st Street stretching west from Fort Washington Avenue forms a self-contained section. This section is defined, geographically, primarily by its height,[1] which separates it from the rest of the neighborhood, as well as by the river at its west and Fort Tryon Park to its north.

Washington Heights

Area west of Broadway

Following the end of the American Revolutionary War, Washington Heights became home to country estates enjoying extraordinary views of the Hudson River, and the area remained largely rural until the beginning of the 20th century. Following a typical urban pattern, the arrival of subway service connecting Washington Heights with the lower parts of the city led to rapid redevelopment. The IRT reached 157th Street at Broadway in 1904, followed

[1] According to the *WPA Guide to New York City*: "The highest natural elevation in Manhattan (267.75 feet) is attained at a point near the interesection of Fort Washington Avenue and 183d Street." Guilds' Committee for Federal Writers' Publications, Inc., Works Progress Administration, *American Guide Series – New York City Guide* (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 301.

by 168th Street and 181st Street in 1906 and 191st Street in 1911, while the Independent Line, which opened in 1932, brought an express connection with midtown and downtown, and the IND stations at 181st Street and 190th Street included elevators to lift passengers up the hill to Fort Washington Avenue. The improvement in transit connections, combined with a 1921 New York State real-estate tax abatement, brought multiple-dwelling residential development to Washington Heights, as it did to many other parts of the city.

Aside from the impact of transit improvements, tax abatements and population growth, Washington Heights owes much of its present-day character to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Between 1936 and 1941, Rockefeller donated to New York City large amounts of property which became Fort Tryon Park, home to the Cloisters (another Rockefeller benefaction) housing the Metropolitan Museum's medieval art collection.[2] During the same period, Rockefeller sold other nearby property to developers, who erected many of the neighborhood's Art Deco apartments on the newly available land.

Washington Heights apartment buildings

Though Washington Heights is a Manhattan neighborhood, its development patterns have more in common with contemporary development in the West Bronx than elsewhere in its own borough. In particular, from the 1920s through the 1940s, the area west of Broadway and north of West 181st Street was developed with six-story apartment buildings that reflected a more modest economy than the Upper West Side, to the south, whose buildings from the period were both larger and more expensive. Not only is Washington Heights similar in urban flavor to the West Bronx – which is generally better known, especially for its Art Deco buildings – but its buildings survive in much better condition. Far too many of the buildings in the West Bronx have lost their original entrances, casement windows, and ornamental detail. The buildings of Washington Heights, by contrast, survive largely intact.

The first major such development in the area was Hudson View Gardens, created by Dr. Charles Paterno, a New York developer who lived in a nearby Hudson River estate.[3] Built 1923-25 as a cooperative garden apartment complex geared specifically to middle-class residents, it was designed by George F. Pelham in the then-popular neo-Tudor style. Individual buildings in similar styles followed during the rest of the decade. By the early 1930s, however – as elsewhere in the city – the eclectic styles so popular for apartment houses had begun to give way to the style now called generally known as Art Deco. Many of the same developers active in the Bronx financed apartment buildings in Washington Heights, and commissioned their designs from many of the same architects who worked in the Bronx: Israel Crausman, Jacob Felson, Horace Ginsbern, Charles Kreymborg, H. Herbert Lillien, and Miller & Goldhammer.

2 "New Playground and Observation Terrace to be Opened by City Today. Playground near Fort Tryon Park Rounds Out Rockefeller Gift to City," *New York Times*, September 23, 1941, p. 25.

2 Andrew Scott Dolkart, "Hudson View Gardens: A Home in The City," *SITES* 34 (1988).

One of the most unusual examples of an Art Deco apartment building in Washington Heights, however, is a notable exception to the general look and flavor reminiscent of the West Bronx: No. 250 Cabrini Boulevard. It was built for a major Manhattan developer, Sam Minskoff. It was designed by Boak & Paris, a firm that worked predominantly in the lower parts of the borough, and designed in a very personal version of Art Deco. And, at eight and nine stories high – perhaps 30% taller than most of its neighbors – it stands out as one of the most visible buildings in the area.

Sam Minskoff

Sam Minskoff (1894-1950) founded a major New York City real-estate dynasty. According to his profile in the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography:

Minskoff, Sam, builder, was born in Priaslov, Russia, Dec. 24, 1884, son of Joseph and Hannah (Wellins) Minskoff. His father was a rabbi. Sam Minskoff came to this country in 1905 and settled in New York City, where he supplemented his basic schooling in Russia with courses at the Cooper Union. He was largely self-educated, however….[4]

Minskoff worked first as a plumber, branching out into apartment house construction in 1908. His initial rise in the city's real estate world coincided with his collaboration with architect Emery Roth, which began in the early 1920s. As Roth later described their collaboration in his unpublished autobiography:

I was supervising the construction of one of the smaller buildings I had designed, in the course of which I had considerable difficulty with the contractor for the plumbing. He not only continually ignored the specifications in regard to the quality of materials, but he stubbornly refused to rectify his work…. When I took action, however, he corrected his omissions and completed the work at a cost greater to him than it would have been had he furnished the materials called for in the first place…. The plumber, as it happened, was also a speculative builder. One day, not long after our disagreement, he came to me to have plans prepared for a block front on Broadway. He said that he would be satisfied if I fought for him as stoutly as I had fought against him.[5]

Minskoff and Roth collaborated on not quite a dozen apartment houses, until they had a falling out over what Roth described as "a contention involving a comparatively trifling amount of money." Minskoff went on to build many dozens of buildings. At his death in 1950, the New York Times described him as a builder of "Hotels, De Luxe Apartment Houses, Hospitals," and "founder and head of Sam Minskoff & Sons, one of the city's leading building firms," with projects throughout Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx.[6] Many of his projects, from the 1930s until his death, were designed by the architectural firm of Boak & Paris, and Minskoff's successors continued working with Boak & Paris's successor firm (Boak & Raad) into the 1960s.

4 *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Volume 38, p. 174.

5 Emery Roth, unpublished manuscript, on file at the archive at Avery Library at Columbia University; p. 305.

6 "Sam Minskoff Dies," *New York Times*, December 27, 1950, p. 24.

Boak & Paris[7]

Russel M. Boak (1896-1981) and Hyman Paris (1890-1966), two young architects working the office of Emery Roth, formed a partnership and went out on their own in 1927. Together they specialized in the design of apartment buildings, though they also branched out into other building types, most notably a movie theater – the Midtown Theater on Broadway at West 99th Street. In the 1930s they turned to a more modern style, today more generally known as Art Deco, but developed a personal version that makes their work instantly distinguishable from the work of their many contemporaries. No. 250 Cabrini Boulevard is among the largest and most interesting of such buildings.

Annice Alt, who has researched the firm's history in depth, notes that Boak had little formal education, and received his training largely through his apprenticeship with Roth; the extent of Paris's architectural education is unknown, but included his early work in the office of Gaetan Ajello. Ajello and Roth were two of the most prominent designers of apartment buildings in the first decades of the 20th century, and Boak and Paris continued in that specialization.

Boak joined Roth's firm in 1912, when he was just 15 years old; by 1923, he had progressed within the firm to the point of owning a 25% interest. Paris joined Roth's office after Boak, sometime between 1919 and 1923. Ms. Alt, who has examined 116 drawings from Roth's office now on file in the archive at Columbia University's Avery Library, has identified a number of buildings on whose design Boak worked – his initials appear on drawings as early as 1915-16. Paris's initials also appear on some of the drawings. Ms. Alt hypothesizes that Boak served as Roth's "chief staff designer" from 1923 to 1927.

In 1922, just one year before Boak's acquisition of his 25% stake in Roth's firm, Roth took on Sam Minskoff as a client, designing 11 buildings for the developer in the mid-1920s, all but one before the departure of Boak and Paris from the firm. In 1931, following his falling out with Roth, Minskoff took his business to the new firm, commissioning two apartment buildings in the Bronx, and soon became their biggest client. (Other major Roth clients who turned to the young firm include Bing & Bing and William Hanna.) As chronicled in the real-estate section of the New York Times, during the 1930s Boak & Paris designed a number of Minskoff projects including a nine-story apartment house at 3 East 66th Street,[8] a six-story apartment house at 77 Cooper Street in Inwood,[9] a 12-story apartment house at 50 East 78th Street,[10] and a 12-story apartment house at 152 East 94th Street.[11] Minskoff also brought in Boak & Paris for commercial projects outside the city limits, including a set of taxpayers on Mamaroneck and Martine avenues in White Plains in 1939[12] and a shopping center in New Rochelle.[13] In the late 1940s, Minskoff worked with the successor firm, Boak & Raad, with plans for Halsey House, an eight-story apartment house in Rego Park at 63rd Drive and 98th Place.[14] In 1954, Minskoff's sons hired the firm to design the Brevoort, a 19-story apartment house in Manhattan on Fifth Avenue from West Eighth to West Ninth

7 This section draws heavily on information provided by historian Annice Alt, who has graciously shared her as yet unfinished monograph on the firm with the author.

8 "Flat to be Built at East 66th Street," *New York Times*, September 19, 1933, p. 40.

9 *New York Times*, February 25, 1936, p. 38.

10 *New York Times*, December 13, 1936, p. RE 1.

11 *New York Times*, April 25, 1937, p. 189.

12 "New Store Groups Built to Serve City and Suburban Residents," *New York Times*, February 12, 1939, p. 150.

13 "Wykagyl Center is Started," *New York Times*, June 4, 1955, p. 24.

14 *New York Times*, May 18, 1947 p. R 1, and April 11, 1948 p. R 1.

streets, on the site of the former Brevoort Hotel.[15] The latest plan filed by Boak & Raad for a Minskoff project in Manhattan appears to have been the adjoining Brevoort East, at No. 20 East Ninth Street, in 1961.

In their first works, in the late 1920s, Boak & Paris followed the typical stylistic eclecticism popular during the decade – their very first project, a Tudor-style apartment building in White Plains, included gables and half-timbering, along with slate-covered peaked roofs. Much of their work in those years could be considered either Tudor or especially "Italian Renaissance" in inspiration. By the early 1930s, however, they had begun to develop a highly individual approach to the new style now termed "Art Deco."

Boak & Paris's Art Deco

The term "Art Deco"[16] – derived from the title of the 1925 Paris "Exhibition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industrielles Modernes" (International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts) – is today used loosely to describe a number of architectural and decorative styles current in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere from the mid-1920s until as late, in some instances, as the mid-1940s.

Daily News Building, 220 East 42nd Street
Raymond Hood, 1929-30
(All photos by Anthony W. Robins unless otherwise noted)

Chrysler Building,
405 Lexington Avenue
William Van Alen, 1930-31

15 "Apartments Rise on Brevoort Site," *New York Times*, August 13, 1954, p. 29.

16 For a general survey and history of Art Deco as a world-wide phenomenon in art, architecture and design in general, see Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton and Ghislaine Wood, Art Deco 1910-1939 (London: V&A Publications, 2003), the catalog accompanying the exhibition of the same name, organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. For a specific focus on New York City Art Deco architecture, see Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter, Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

In New York City architecture, the style developed first in some two dozen skyscrapers, built between 1923 and 1932, and then filtered out and down to building types of all kinds across the city – apartment buildings, hotels, diners, movie theaters, bus and airline terminals. Chief characteristics of the style include a vertical emphasis, created especially by placing windows in uninterrupted columns; a sculptural approach to design, making inventive use of the setback requirements of the 1916 zoning resolution; and the application of ornament generally based either on abstract geometrical patterns or on stylized floral motifs.

The architects of the Art Deco apartment houses built in the 1930s in the West Bronx – as well as those in other parts of the city including Flatbush, Brighton Beach and Washington Heights – reflected the style as it had developed in the great skyscrapers. Marvin Fine, chief designer for the firm of Horace Ginsbern, designed what appears to be the very first such building in the Bronx, Park Plaza Apartments at 1005 Jerome Avenue, built 1928-31, and specifically looked for inspiration to Raymond Hood's Daily News Building and William Van Alen's Chrysler Building.[17] Generally, such buildings made use of light brick with black and red brick for ornamental trim, and relied on such typically Deco ornament as window spandrels with red and black brick set in geometric patterns; corner casement windows; and uninterrupted columns of light brick rising to and above the roofline, which was often marked by geometrically patterned metal cresting. Fine remarked that the red and black brick spandrels on his Bronx buildings came directly from the red and black brick spandrels on the Daily News Building. The same was true of his designs in Washington Heights.

Daily New Building, 220 E. 42nd St.
Raymond Hood, 1929-30

Tryon Towers, 223 Cabrini Blvd.
Horace Ginsbern, 1935-36

And most of the other Art Deco apartment buildings in Washington Heights followed that approach.

[17] Interview with the author, 1981. Excerpts may be found in "New York from Classic to Moderne: Local Architects Remember," *Everyday Masterpieces* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1988).

499 Fort Washington Avenue, Jacob M. Felson, 1936

Not all architects of apartment buildings in that period took that route, however. George and Edward Blum, for instance, designed some of the very first Art Deco apartment buildings in New York in 1928, but their designs bear little relationship to the city's skyscrapers.

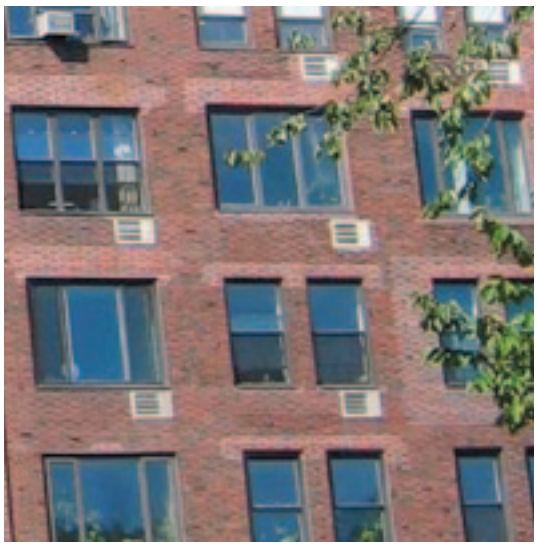
210 East 68th Street, George and Edward Blum, 1929-30

Similarly, Boak & Paris took their newly modern design in a somewhat different direction, to some extent growing out of the style of some of their earlier buildings. A comparison of 444 Central Park West (built 1929-30) and 227 East 57th Street (built 1930-31) shows two buildings that appear quite similar in design – tall apartment buildings faced in red brick, with a certain amount of cast-stone ornament at windows on the lower floors and again towards the roof, and a series of receding setbacks.

444 Central Park West
Boak & Paris, 1929-30

227 East 57th Street
Boak & Paris, 1930-31

Each of them relies on interesting brick patterns, with a modest variety of colors, and the occasional projecting brick adding texture.



444 Central Park West, detail

227 East 57th Street, detail

The ornament at 444 Central Park West, however, is modeled on traditional European styles, including tall, narrow, neo-Romanesque arches supported on columns with carved capitals at the second and third stories, along with similar windows in a different pattern towards the roofline; it also includes corbelled brick. At 227 East 57th, the ornament differs – there are double-height cast-stone faced windows at the third and fourth stories, but instead of round arches on columns, the windows are set within a rectangular surround whose ornamental detail

includes such typically geometric ornament as a zig-zag pattern surround and curved and ribbed projections, together with panels of typically Deco stylized floral patterns. And the three central windows are set in vertical columns, with brick spandrels with vertical zig-zag brick rows.

444 Central Park West, window detail

227 East 57th Street, window detail

The shift seems modest, but illustrates what became Boak & Paris's typical Deco look – a stylized version of their earlier dark red brick and light stone trim eclectic designs. At 315 Riverside Drive (built 1930-31) the ornamental design became overwhelmingly Deco, with

315 Riverside Drive

315 Riverside Drive, entrance detail

geometrically patterned brickwork and geometrically modeled cast-stone window surrounds, along with stylized floral patterns, as well as metal railings in similar patterns. The main entrance at No. 315 is a solidly three-dimensional two-story cast-stone entrance with rounded corners seemingly stamped with stylized floral patterns, typically Deco wavy lines above the doorway, and more stylized floral patterns above.

None of this look suggests the modernism of Hood or Van Alen – it is distinctive of Boak & Paris, the firm's personal version of the Deco style. The architects often added such typical period features as corner casement windows and sunken living rooms, but the overall ornamental approach remained strictly personal.

Interestingly, Boak & Paris seemed willing to design in more traditional forms if required. No. 110 East 87th Street, for instance, built in 1937, reverts to more typically European forms – perhaps the Upper East Side preferred a more conservative look than Riverside Drive. But the overall effect of dark red brick and light cast-stone window ornament – including some vertical brickwork – marks the design unmistakably as the firm's work.

No. 250 Northern Avenue / Cabrini Boulevard

The years of the mid-1930s were slim ones in the construction business, but Boak & Paris continued to get work, largely from Minskoff. Ms. Alt quotes Gertrude Sklar Bell, an employee of the firm, as saying: "Boak & Paris would have gone out of business if it weren't for Sam Minskoff, who seemed to have money when others didn't."

In 1936, the situation citywide seemed to be improving. As reported in the Times in January 1937:

> *West Side brokers and owners have just closed a year with more tangible evidences of prosperity than they have experienced since the advent of the depression period seven years ago. The situation for 1937 looks even brighter and there is more confidence and hopefulness in real estate circles throughout that great home area west of Central Park all the way from Fifty-ninth Street northward to Washington Heights and the Dyckman and Inwood sections at the extreme end of Manhattan Island. Apartment houses which accommodate the majority of residents in this wide territory are better rented and at more substantial rentals than have prevailed for at least six years. Collections to a large extent have ceased to be a problem…and investment buying, which is the real criterion of realty confidence, is returning with more rapidity than many of the leading brokers had dared to anticipate six months ago.*
>
> The article cited particularly an increase in building activity in Washington Heights, and noted:

Among the more recent projects for the upper Heights region are an eight-story house to be built by Sam Minskoff on the northeast corner of Northern Avenue and 187th Street....[18]

Plans for that a new apartment building, at 250 Northern Avenue (as Cabrini Boulevard was known at the time), had first surfaced in the press in April, 1936, in an announcement in the Times:

Plans for a new apartment house on Washington Heights...[were] announced in connection with realty deals in Manhattan yesterday.....

Samuel Minskoff, builder, bought the block front on the south side of West 187th Street, from Northern to Chittenden Avenues, for a six-story elevator apartment house which he plans to have ready for occupancy next Fall. The buyer acquired the realty in the name of his 250 Northern Avenue Corporation from Leonora F. Kohler and others. The property had been held in the sellers' family for more than fifty years.

*There are 11,000 square feet of land in the site, sale of which was negotiated by E.H. Ludlow & Co. The block front is 170 feet long, the other frontages being 87.9 on Chittenden Avenu*e and 50 feet on Northern Avenue. It is assessed at $55,000.[19]

Six weeks later, construction was underway, with the planned building illustrated in a Times article about new buildings. The caption read:

Nine-story apartment house being built by Samuel Minskoff for the 250 Northern Avenue Corporation on the south side of 187th Street between Northern and Chittenden Avenues, near Fort Tryon Park; Boak & Paris, architects.[20]

A year later, in May 1937, the Times noted the building's "modern style":

New Apartment Houses Built in Modern Style

Dropped living rooms, dining balconies and corner casement windows are features of the eight-story building planned for occupancy in August at Northern Avenue and 187th Street to accommodate seventy-nine families. Sam Minskoff & Sons are the builders, and Boak & Paris are the architects.[21]

Like many apartment buildings of the period, No. 250 Northern Avenue had a marketing brochure which highlighted its various features:

New 9 Story Fireproof and Soundproof Apartment Building

In a setting of Parks and Gardens, Open Courts and Lovely Country side

High up above Riverside Drive, commanding a magnificent view of the broad Hudson, the wooded slopes of the picturesque Palisades, and George Washington Bridge, this fine new modern elevator apartment building will combine the rare advantages of a smart town residence and a delightful country setting.

18 Frank W. Crane, "West Side Realty Showing Recovery," *New York Times*, January 31, 1937, p. 181.

19 "Minskoff Plans Flat on Heights," *New York Times*, April 18, 1936, p. 28.

20 "New Buildings Adding to Manhattan's residential and industrial facilities," *New York Times*, June 1, 1936, p. RE 1.

21 "New Apartment Houses Built in Modern Style," *New York Times*, May 9, 1937, p. RE 2.

Within twenty minutes of Times Square via Eighth Avenue Subway or Broadway Subway, with stations only a few steps away – with Fifth Avenue Buses convenient to the building – tenants will enjoy the advantage of a midtown address.

Large, hospitable suites of 2 to 3 1/2 rooms, their appearance of spaciousness enhanced by stepped-down living rooms, ballustraded [sic] galleries and broad sunny windows. Such features as Venetian blinds, corner casements, dining bays and alcoves, room-sized foyers, ample closets, one and two baths, and the most modern of kitchen equipment. The apartments are so arranged that each is in effect a corner apartment and has cross ventilation.

Facing the Hudson River, there will be a large roof garden fitted up with fountains, lights, deck chairs, radio outlets, and a pagoda to be enjoyed during the day and night time. For additional convenience of the tenants there will be a mail chute, and day and night service.

The building will be under owner-management, thus giving assurance to tenants that proper management will exist at all times. Careful restricted selection of tenants. Suitable references required.

The design of 250 Cabrini Boulevard

At eight stories tall on Cabrini Boulevard – and nine stories on Chittenden Avenue, thanks to the slope of West 187th Street – 250 Cabrini is both unusually tall and long compared to many of its neighbors.

250 Cabrini Boulevard, looking along West 187th Street westward from Cabrini Boulevard

Because of an irregular property line, the building's rear façade, on the south, runs at an angle, resulting in a narrower façade on Cabrini Boulevard (six bays) and a wider façade on Chittenden Avenue (ten bays).

Floor plan for original building brochure, showing irregular plot plan

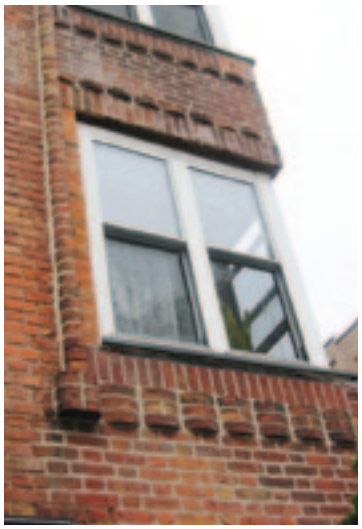
The building is faced in red brick, varying in tone, some dark and some light. Typically for Boak & Paris designs, the building's ornament derives from the color and patterning of the brick and the use of cast-stone accents.

Cabrini Boulevard

Chittenden Avenue

Above the first story, the facades are organized by the use of multiple-window bays – sets of two bays are framed by flat piers with delicately rounded edges, while the two windows of each bay are separated by a projecting round molded brick vertical. The window spandrels within these bays are treated with simple but geometric brick patterning at their sides, contrasting with plain window spandrels elsewhere. There are four of these two-windows-wide bays along West 187th Street, and two each on Cabrini Boulevard and Chittenden Avenue. They rise to molded, scalloped cast-stone caps at the roofline, where their central projecting round molded brick verticals are topped by a central cast-stone ornament combining a projecting molded roundel with, above it, a molded stylized anthemion.

At the bottom, these two-window-wide bays stop just above the first story, where they rest on projecting cast-stone bands incised with a Greek fret. The sections of wall between these bays are treated more simply, resting on a simple brick corbelling above the first story, and rising to a roofline – lower than the neighboring bays – adorned with simple cast-stone squares with shallow pyramidal forms in their center, and topped by a metal railing.



A third treatment is reserved for the corner bays, which are marked by corner windows (originally casements; the other windows were originally double-hung three-over-three sash) and more elaborately patterned brick spandrels.

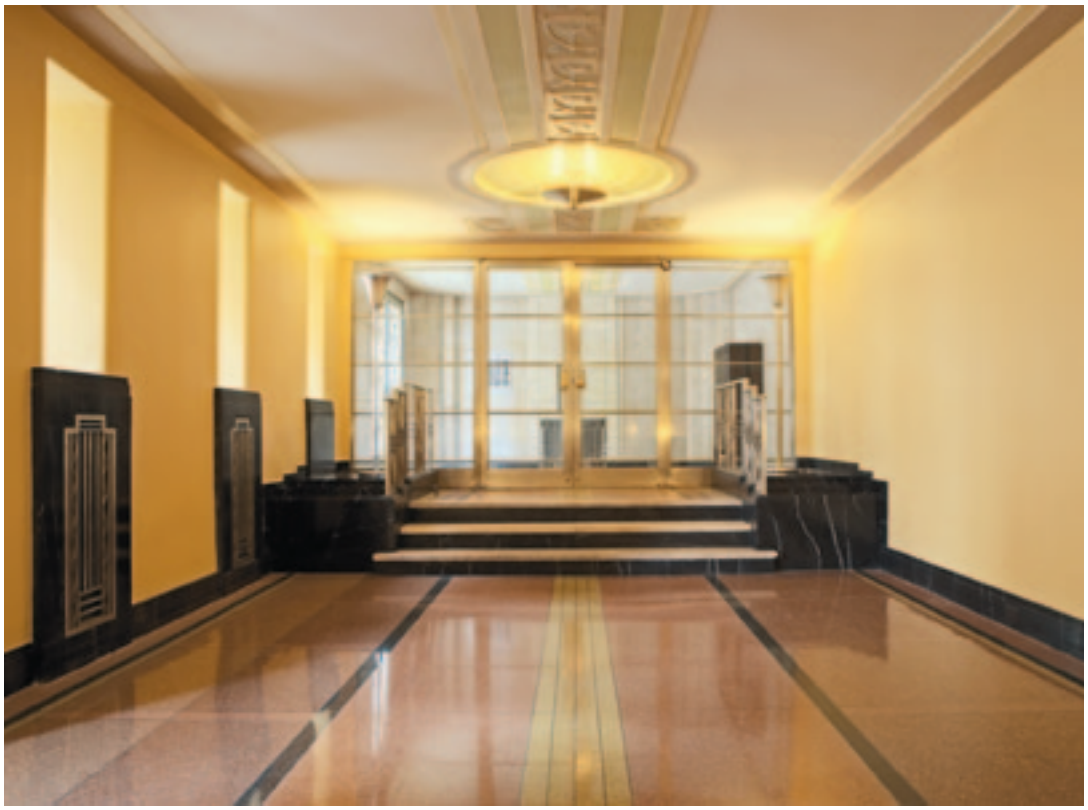
The central portion of the long West 187th Street façade is recessed, sufficiently to permit an additional corner window, thereby creating an eight-window-wide central entrance area (though two of these windows, for bathrooms, are narrower than the norm). It is fronted by a raised areaway, with a molded cast-stone border. The center of this recessed section is marked by another projecting molded brick vertical, which rises to an abstract, geometrically patterned, projecting cast-stone ornamental cap.

The first story of this entire section is faced in panels of red Verona marble; this marble rises to the second story as well at the entranceway. The entranceway itself is a flanked by translucent light fixtures of onyx and glass, and capped by a shallow canopy, above which rises a geometric vertical element of white marble.

Elaborately ornamental geometric metalwork includes an iron acroteria at the base of the white marble vertical; wrought-iron floral patterns over the glass of the doors; wrought-iron railings on the cast-stone areaway border; and geometrically patterned metal grilles over the first story windows.

The building's entrance vestibule and lobby survive remarkably intact, and thanks to a restoration in 2008-09 supervised by Francoise Bollack Architects they look largely as they did when the building opened.

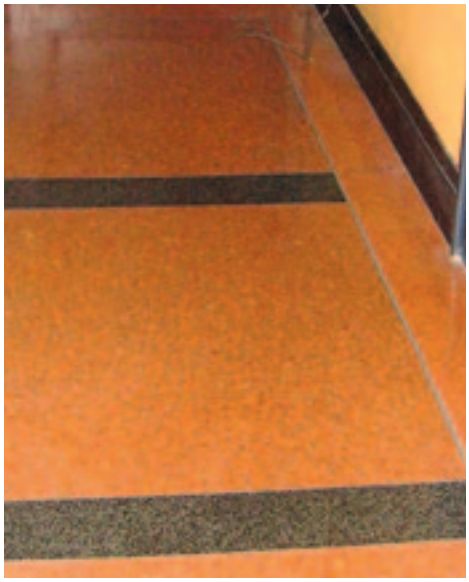
Entrance vestibule seen from the lobby *(Photo: Henrik Olund, courtesy Françoise Bollack Architects)*

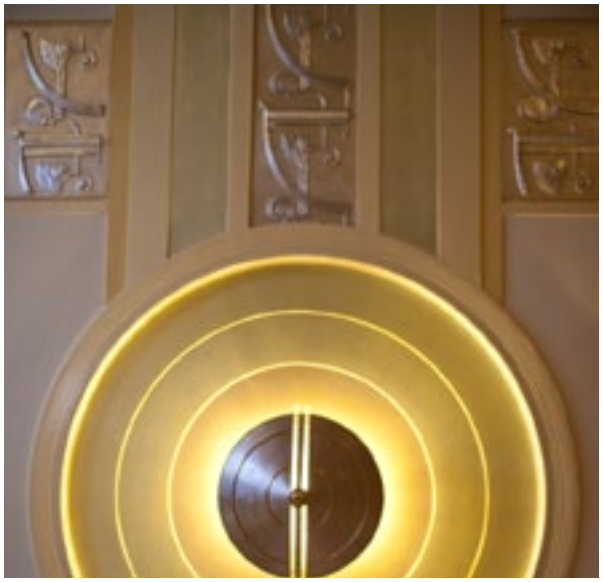


The lobby, eastern half *(Photo: Henrik Olund, courtesy Françoise Bollack Architects)*

The lobby, western half *(Photo: Henrik Olund, courtesy Françoise Bollack Architects)*

Both vestibule and lobby have polychromatic terrazzo floors, tan marble walls, and a molded plaster ceiling with stylized floral patterns.

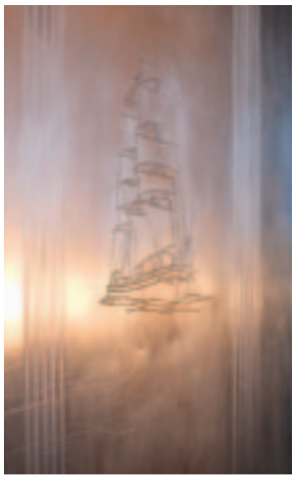




(Photo: Henrik Olund, courtesy Françoise Bollack Architects)

Details include a marble fireplace, metal radiator grilles in geometric designs, geometrically patterned stairway railings, and elevator doors with a maritime design (Annice Alt suggests it might reflect the location overlooking the Hudson River).

(Photo: Henrik Olund, courtesy Françoise Bollack Architects)



Today

No. 250 Cabrini Boulevard today is owned as a co-operative apartment building. With the exception of the original casement windows, and some of the features of the original roof garden, it survives almost entirely intact. The co-operative corporation has recently completed a major restoration of its lobby, and is currently considering replacing the existing non-historic aluminum windows with a combination of wood double-hung and steel corner casement windows, to restore the original window design. As an Art Deco design by Boak & Paris, it forms part of the 1930s cityscape of this part of Washington Heights. At the same time, because of its size, and because of its unusual design, reflecting Boak & Paris's personal version of the style, it stands out as one of the handsomest such buildings anywhere in the neighborhood.

250 Cabrini
boulevard
WASHINGTON HEIGHTS