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PAUL GOLDBERGER

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skyline—the Hampshire House with its green peaked roof (recalling the shape of the mourned Savoy-Plaza, razed to make way for the General Motors Building) and the Essex House with its fine setbacks. The Essex House steps back grandly, like a mountain, a perfect realization of the romantic visionary drawings of skyscrapers as massed mountains done by Hugh Ferriss in the 1920's. There is some fine Art Deco detailing on the façade (gone, alas, from the interior), whereas the Hampshire House has a black and mirrored lobby that seems incomplete without a lingering Carole Lombard. The block is completed by the New York Athletic Club (York & Sawyer, 1929) a 20-story version of an Italian Renaissance palace that may or may not work very well as a gym, but thanks to the fact that its design was done by New York's leading firm of bank architects in the 1920's, clearly makes its users feel at home.

Across Seventh Avenue, Central Park South becomes solely the province of apartment houses. Three of the six on the block are worth special note. No. 200, the extravagant curving façade at the corner of Seventh Avenue (Wechsler & Schimenti, 1964) has been laughed at for years as New York's best piece of Miami Beach architecture. It looks better and better upon close examination. The swooping curve is not a bad way at all for a large avenue to meet Central Park, and it does no harm to the line of buildings along Central Park South. The narrow tower on top is an amusing imitation (no doubt unintentional) of Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Company tower. The details are a bit crude and the fountain in front is downright awful, but these aspects aside, 200 Central Park South is worth taking seriously.

The only building of distinction on Central Park South that belongs to the Plaza Hotel's generation is the Gainsborough Studios at No. 222 (Charles W. Buckham, 1908). This could be a bit of West 67th Street (III B 8) misplaced eight blocks downtown, but the façade is far more interesting than anything on 67th Street. There is a portal of Ionic columns, with bas-reliefs above and a bust above that. At that point the fun is only beginning—there are several floors of studio windows above that, and then for the upper few floors the façade bursts into mosaic and a flurry of ornament at the top.

The street's last building is one of its very finest, No. 240 Central Park South (Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass, 1940). Here, urbanistic concerns were paramount, and the solution chosen was altogether different, and far more subtle, than that for No. 200 at the other end of the block. There, the corner was turned in a single curve, whereas at No. 240 a complex form consisting of a pair of towers atop a zigzag, garden-topped base was used. The base brings variety to storefronts and rhythm to the building's Columbus Circle façade; the overall massing emphasizes park views and brings individuality to apartment layouts. It is a remarkably sophisticated design, substantially ahead of its time in its knowing response to a difficult urban site.

II G 14 · COLUMBUS CIRCLE: Intersection of Broadway and Eighth Avenue

This is a chaotic jumble of streets that can be crossed in about fifty different ways—all of them wrong. It is really just a big traffic intersection, not a