

29th Street Towers

**214 West 29th Street (aka 214-220 West 29th Street) and 224 West 29th Street (aka 222-226 West 29th Street), Manhattan
Tax Map Block 778. Lot(s) 48, 52**

Built: 1925-26

Architect: Henry I. Oser

Style: Gothic revival

Proposed Action: Calendared April 22, 2025; Public Hearing: May 20, 2025; Proposed for Designation: August 12, 2025



West 29th Street Towers, LPC

The 29th Street Towers consists of a 16-story building at 214 (aka 214-220) and 14-story building at 224 (aka 222-226) West 29th Street separated by a four-story connecting building. Built under the same New Building permit, the complex was designed in 1925 by Henry Oser for two developers, the 220 W. 29th Street Corp., owners of 214-220 West 29th Street, and the Muloft Builing Co., owners of 222-226 West 29th Street, as a mixed-use commercial and manufacturing building housing offices, showrooms, and factories above a commercial ground floor. Executed in tan brick, the buildings feature an unusual arrangement of setbacks, which provide balconies and ample light for each floor. The verticality of each of the taller towers is highlighted by wide piers and narrower mullions topped at the various rooflines by Gothic Revival decoration executed in terra cotta with a mottled glaze. The structures are tied together by the same mottled terra-cotta cladding across the entire first story that frames the arched entrance at 214 and the historic metal storefronts of the complex.

The towers were constructed for fur manufacturing companies as part of the “fur district” within Manhattan’s Garment Center. The towers speak to the history of the fur district in the decorative grotesques featured at the entrance of the building. In an alternating pattern, a man is holding a beaver and appearing to feed it, and in the next he appears to be inspecting its pelt. The beaver, instrumental to the growth of both the fur trade and larger development in New York, is a crucial piece of New York’s history, its use in the grotesque is both symbolic of the work done in this building, and the larger significance of the fur industry to this neighborhood.

The architect, Henry I. Oser (c. 1864-1935) was born in Kiev, then part of Russia, and immigrated to the United States as a young man. He attended Columbia University, where he studied civil engineering. Oser began his career as an engineer with the New York City Department of Buildings (1911-18) and in 1919, he turned to architecture. In addition to the 29th Street Towers, Oser’s commissions for the garment industry included the Fashion Centre Building, 525 Seventh Avenue (1922) and the Furcraft Building, 242-246 West 30th Street (1925). Oser’s work is represented in the designated Borough Hall Skyscraper Historic District.

During the years between the wars, garment manufacturing, selling, and its related trades became New York's largest industry. The fur trade, a subset of the garment industry with a somewhat more specialized production, established the Fur Center in the adjoining neighborhood to the south, between 25th and 31st Streets, between Sixth and Eighth Avenues, to be the home of this labor-intensive industry which employed highly skilled fur designers and production workers, their sales and design staff, as well as their suppliers. With its intact façade and distinctive terra cotta decoration, the 29th Street Towers is a standout example of the manufacturing and commercial buildings built to house the fur industry in the Garment Center.

