

15 CENTRAL PARK WEST

architectural history



It is fair to say that there has never been an apartment building in New York City quite like 15 Central Park West. Designed by one of the preeminent architects of our time – Robert A.M. Stern – every apartment in this condominium building was sold before it even opened in 2008. It now commands among the highest prices in Manhattan.

The building sits on a trapezoidal-shaped site between 61st and 62nd Streets on Central Park West. It shares that heralded avenue with such distinguished prewar architectural classics as the Century, the Majestic, the San Remo and the Eldorado. It

looks east across the verdant landscape of Central Park, and westward across Broadway, where it is only steps away from Columbus Circle and the shops and restaurants of the towering Time Warner Center.

Before this building was constructed, what stood at 15 Central Park West was the Mayflower Hotel on the Park, an 18-story, 365-room hotel that had been designed by famed architect Emory Roth and built in the mid-1920s. The westward-facing site fronting on Broadway was vacant.

In 2004, both sites were purchased by a consortium lead by the influential and visionary developers William and Arthur Zeckendorf. At a public sale at the Mayflower before its demolition, bargain-hunters snapped up furniture and fixtures ranging from 38 pedestal sinks, to cut-glass lobby chandeliers, to elegant bronze Cutler mail-chute boxes.

The demolition made way for the construction of an unprecedented apartment building; it is no exaggeration to say that 15 Central Park West was the most successful new residential development in Manhattan. When it opened in 2008, architecture critic Paul Goldberger, writing in *Vanity Fair*, called it “The King of Central Park West” and “the architectural equivalent of the highest-grossing movie in history.”

When 15 Central Park West was in the planning stages, the Zeckendorfs invited six of the world’s top architectural firms to propose plans. The one they found most appealing – by far – was that of Robert A.M. Stern, the long-time dean of the Yale School of Architecture, and, as *Vanity Fair* called him, “a wildly productive architect, scholar and teacher.” His proposal was for

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*transcending
the ordinary*

"I've always been fascinated by New York's architecture and love to share their histories with the residents of these special buildings. Hope you enjoy!"

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a building comprised of two parts – a 19-story building on Central Park West called “The House,” which respectfully echoed the taste level and scale of its neighbors, and, on Broadway, the taller 35-story structure called “The Tower.” The two sections are linked by a central copper-roofed oval pavilion that provides a private entrance to the building.

The building is clad in limestone, a material prized by architects for its light-reflecting qualities and one that can be seen on some of New York’s most architecturally distinguished landmarks – the Empire State Building and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as such great apartment houses as 998 Fifth Avenue and 740 Park Avenue.

Its appeal is easy to understand. The building offers apartments with the scale, scope, layouts and charm of the best of Manhattan’s prewar apartments, but it also offers up-to-the-minute accoutrements and all the conveniences of 21st-century living. Amenities include a 75-foot-long lap pool, a screening room, a billiard room, a library and wine cellars. The apartments, which range from one bedroom to eight bedrooms, were designed with families and entertaining in mind. The kitchens are oversized. Light floods the apartment interiors through large bay windows and glass doors that open onto French balconies.

Even architect Robert A. M. Stern professes to be surprised at the sky-high prices commanded by the apartments he created. “I always thought it was going to be a very important building,” Stern told the *New York Times* in 2012, “and I thought it would find a particular place in the market of people who appreciate what it means to New York.

“But I can’t say that I ever imagined that it would reach the stratospheric heights from the real estate point of view that it has.”