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A Look Inside the Accidentally Preserved 5 Beekman Street

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Photo: Darren Ketchum

When 5 Beekman Street (then known as Temple Court) was built in the 19th century, its ten stories of terra-cotta and brick qualified the building as a skyscraper. Because of, in all likelihood, a change in the fire code, its original, stunning atrium was walled off in the 1940s in an accidental act of preservation. The building's trajectory parallels the story of downtown New York's history: It flourished first as a legal and publishing hub and later held an assortment of small businesses as larger corporations headed to midtown. In the post-9/11, depths-of-economic-meltdown aughts, it lay empty. But the neighborhood is changing, thanks to the debut of the Freedom Tower and the opening of Santiago Calatrava's winged megatransportation hub in 2015. And construction has begun on the Beekman, an apartment-hotel conversion set to open

next year, that will build a condo tower next to 5 Beekman and preserve the atrium and its eight floors of balustrades.



A 1892 sketch of the building from *King's Handbook of New York City*

1881: Theatrical Opening

Construction begins on the site, which once held a theater that premiered Shakespeare's Hamlet for an American audience. Early tenants include the National Rifle Association.

1893: Fire

Parts of the building are swallowed by a blaze that began in a typewriting office.

1911: Suicide

A 19-year-old waiter jumps from the ninth floor after he was fired from the building's cafeteria.

1940s–50s: Small Businesses

Tenants include a marine-insurance broker, the War Resisters League, and the Citizens' Union.



A rendering of the conjoined Beekman Hotel and Beekman Residences buildings.

1998: Landmark Status

The city awards the designation to the building.

2001: Emptied

The last tenant, architect Joseph Pell Lombardi, vacates the premises; the building is closed.

2008: Recession Casualty

Developers Joseph Chetrit and Charles Dayan purchase 5 Beekman, only to end up in litigation against each other just as the economy crashes.

2010: Sudden Attention

The building becomes a magnet for urban explorers and photographers. Iman shoots a *Harper's Bazaar* fashion spread here.

2012: Yeezus

Kanye West attends a Great Gatsby–esque Maison Martin Margiela for H&M launch party held here in October.

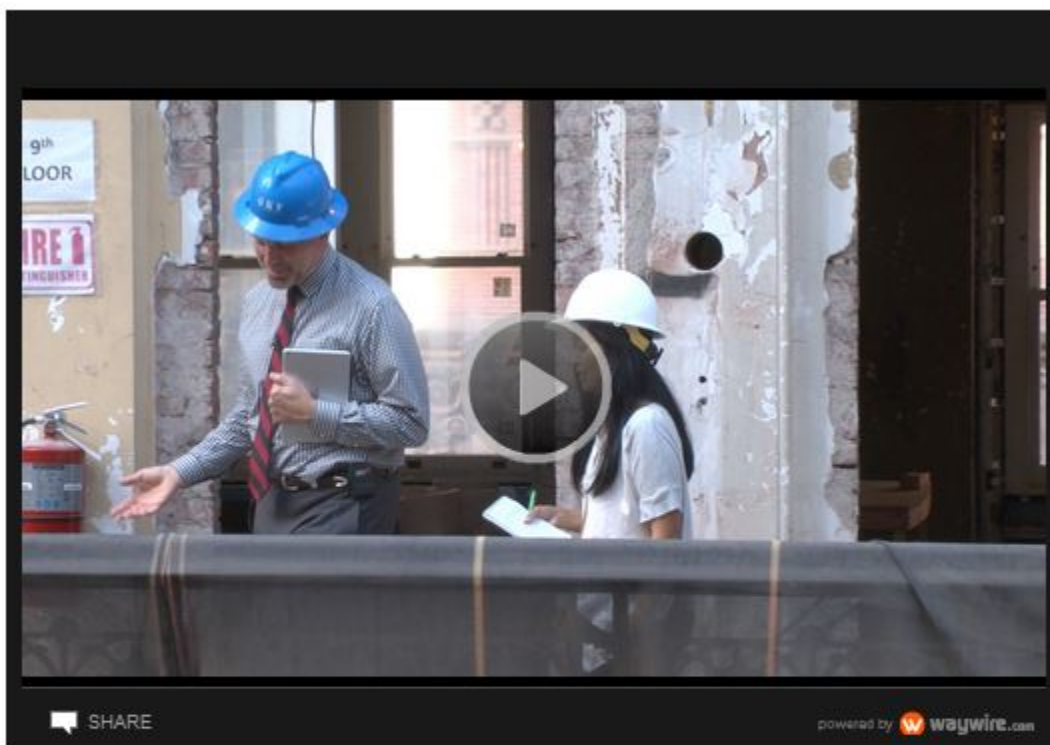
2013: Under Construction

Workers begin restoration, a year after GFI Development buys the property and an adjacent lot for \$86 million.

2014: On the Market

Apartments are selling for \$1.225 million. Tom Colicchio and Keith McNally will reportedly open restaurants here.

Video: Take a tour of the under-construction 5 Beekman.



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