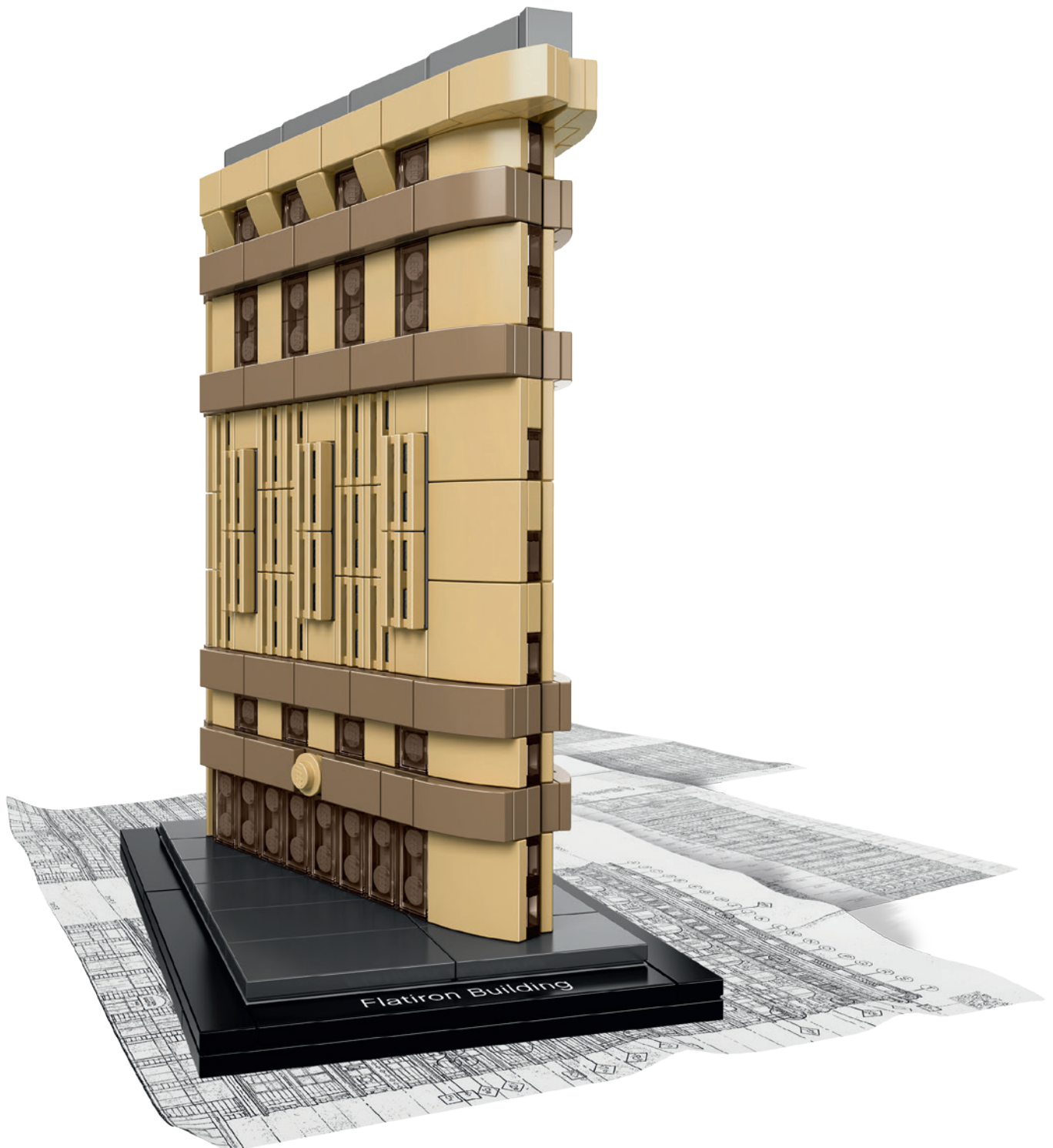




Architecture

Flatiron Building

New York City, NY, USA



Flatiron Building

Sitting on the intersection where Fifth Avenue and Broadway cross, the Flatiron Building (originally named the Fuller Building) remains one of New York City's most popular and memorable structures. Today it is difficult to imagine the controversy this architectural landmark created on its completion in 1902.

[I found myself agape, admiring a sky-scraper... ploughing up through the traffic of Broadway and Fifth Avenue in the afternoon light.]

H. G. Wells, 1906



History

As the city of New York expanded northward during the second half of the 19th century, small plots of land in between or on the edge of new buildings remained undeveloped. One of the most well known of these was the narrow triangular site at 23rd Street, between Fifth Avenue and Broadway. The “Flat Iron,” as it quickly became known, changed owners many times, but wouldn’t be developed until the Chicago-based Fuller Company bought the site in 1901.

The Fuller Company, a major Chicago-based contracting firm specializing in the construction of skyscrapers, planned to build a new showcase headquarter on the site. The founder of the company, George A. Fuller, had died the year before, and the new building would be named the Fuller Building in his honor.

The Fuller Company engaged Chicago architect Daniel H. Burnham to design the building and, utilizing the Fuller Company’s expertise with steel frame construction, he proposed a 20-story structure that would reach a height of 285 ft. (86.9 m). A penthouse would be added in 1905, increasing the building’s height to 307 ft. (93 m). The building’s Broadway front would be 190 ft. (60 m) wide, the Fifth Avenue front 173 ft. (52.7 m) wide, and the 22nd Street side just short of 87 ft. (26.5 m) wide. At the “point” of the triangle the building would only be 6.5 ft. (2 m) wide and would form a 25-degree acute angle.

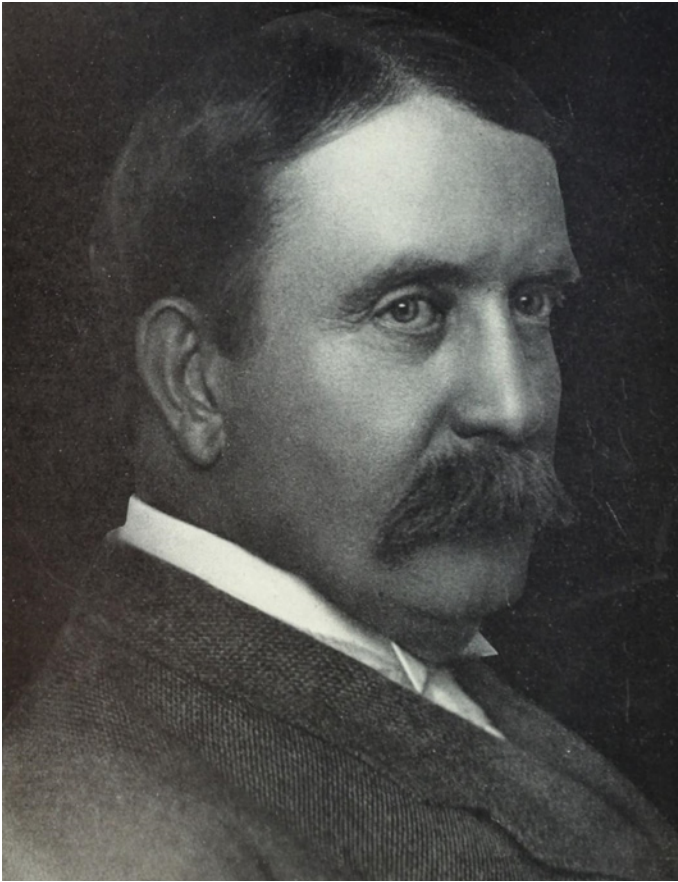


Burnham saw the building as a vertical Renaissance palazzo with Beaux-Arts, or neoclassical, styling. Visually the building would be divided into three distinct sections. It would consist of a richly decorated, three-story limestone façade at the bottom and a broad, repetitive midsection in a light tan monochrome terra cotta. The structure would then be topped off with a crowning cornice that would run the entire length of the building.

With its steel skeleton structure, the construction of the building was carried out rapidly and without major incident. While other New York skyscrapers at the time were often thin towers rising from pedestal-like blocks, the Flatiron was a single massive structure. This radical design, combined with its great height and unusual shape, created a great deal of debate as the building neared completion in 1902.

Many New Yorkers believed the structure would be unstable and would fall over at the first gust of wind. The building had even been nicknamed “Burnham’s Folly” and bets were placed on how far the debris would reach when it blew over. Strong winds came and went, and the Flatiron Building withstood them—as it continues to do today, over a century later. It is proof that the structure was not only a strong architectural idea, but a groundbreaking engineering marvel as well.

The Architect



© Wikipedia

Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846 – 1912)

Born in New York and raised in Chicago, Daniel H. Burnham would become one of the founding fathers of the first Chicago School of architects. Together with his then-partner John W. Root, Burnham built one of the first American skyscrapers, the 21-story Masonic Temple Building in Chicago in 1892, and planned the architectural layout of the largest World Fair ever held at that time in 1893.

Burnham's architecture mixed elements of Modernism with a more neoclassical style. Many of his buildings, including the Flatiron Building, followed the convention of the classical column: three distinct parts made up of a base, a middle section, and an ornate cornice at the top.

Burnham's early sketches for the Flatiron Building included a clock face and a far more elaborate crown at the top of the building, but he was persuaded to remove both by his former partner John W. Root. Although Burnham retained overall control of the project, he engaged the architect F. P. Dinkelberg (1859–1935) to carry out most of the supervising work during the actual construction.



© Wikipedia

Plan for San Francisco by Daniel Burnham and William Bennett, published 1906



© Wikipedia

Plan for the development of Manila, submitted to the Philippine Commission by D. H. Burnham, 1905

After the Flatiron Building, Burnham would continue to work on a series of impressive architectural projects, including a number of major planning tasks for the cities of San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Manila in the Philippines. At the time of his death in 1912, his D. H. Burnham & Co. architectural firm was the largest in the world.

The Building Today

Although never the tallest building in New York, or even the first building in the country with a triangular ground plan, the Flatiron Building remains an iconic symbol of the city of New York. Its enduring popularity with tourists, artists, and photographers also makes it one of the most photographed buildings in the world.

The famous building has appeared in countless movies, TV series, and comics. It was home to Peter Parker's *Daily Bugle* in the *Spiderman* movies, and was even accidentally destroyed by the U.S. Army in the 1998 film *Godzilla*.

The building was designated a New York City Landmark in 1966, added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, and became a National Historic Landmark in 1989. Valued today at \$190 million, the Flatiron Building continues to function as a popular retail and office space, and is home to a large number of U.S. and international companies. In 2009, Sorgente Group of America acquired the majority stake of the Flatiron Building. Sorgente Group of America is the American Holding of Sorgente Group, an Italian real estate investment company.

[... appeared to be moving toward me like the bow of a monster ocean steamer—a picture of a new America still in the making.]

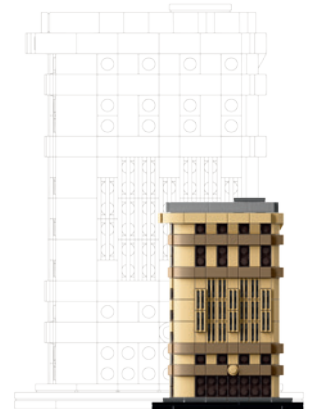
Photographer Alfred Stieglitz



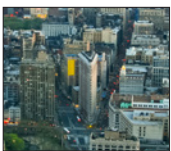
Facts about Flatiron Building



Location: New York City, USA
 Architect: D. H. Burnham & Co: Daniel H. Burnham
 Style: Renaissance Revival with Beaux-Arts styling
 Materials: Steel frame structure, façade of limestone and terra-cotta
 Height: 1902: 285 ft. (86.9 m). Today: 307 ft. (93 m).
 Weight: 3,680 tons (3,338.5 metric tons)
 Opened: 1902

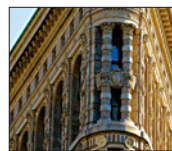


Facts and Statements



©Shutterstock

Due to the site's resemblance to a clothes iron it was called the "Flat Iron" long before the building itself was constructed.



©Veronica Mainetti

The windows are deliberately small in size to ensure the building appears even more substantial.



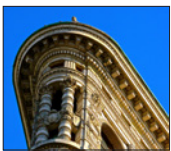
©Veronica Mainetti

The steel for the building's skeleton frame came from the American Bridge Company mills in Pennsylvania, U.S.



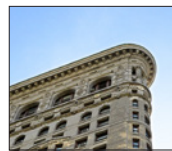
©Veronica Mainetti

The façade includes many Italian and French Renaissance motifs, such as Greek faces and terra-cotta flowers.



©Veronica Mainetti

During the peak construction of the steel frame, builders were adding a new story every day.



©Veronica Mainetti

The upper floor originally housed a restaurant and an observation deck, both now closed.



©Wikipedia

Six Otis Company hydraulic elevators were installed in the building, powered by water pressure and pistons that activated a system of ropes and pulleys.

[What the Parthenon was to Athens, the Flatiron Building is to New York.]

Photographer Alfred Stieglitz

