

# Exploring Downtown



## 48 Wall Street

Benjamin Wistar Morris, Architect, 1927-29



Photo courtesy of The Bank of New York

Above: 48 Wall Street, image of tower from above

### Museum of American Finance

What more appropriate home for the Museum of American Finance than the grand, 30-foot-high banking hall of the former Bank of New York building? The museum—an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution—is the only one of its kind in America. Effectively serving as the New York Stock Exchange's de facto visitors' center, the museum displays permanent interactive exhibits on finance, money, entrepreneurship and banking. These feature rare examples of Colonial currency; stock and bond certificates dating from the 18th century to the present; high denomination currency including \$1,000, \$5,000, and \$10,000 bills; and hundreds of images of the financial district. The museum includes a room dedicated to Hamilton, founder of the bank and the country's first Treasury Secretary.

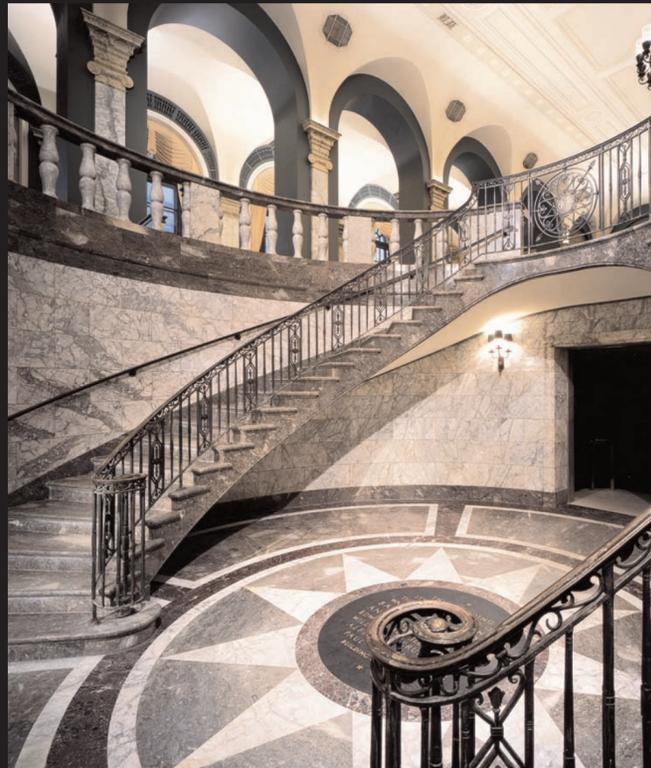
### 48 Wall Street

The Bank of New York—oldest bank in the city, founded in 1784 by Alexander Hamilton—commissioned a new headquarters (their third on this site) in 1927. The Bank instructed architect Benjamin Wistar Morris to incorporate something of the institution's Colonial history in the design. That history is evident inside the main banking hall, where eight murals by J. Monroe Hewlett illustrate the story of American commerce and the life of the Bank. Outside, the building's major Colonial reference is meant to be seen from a distance: a tower reminiscent of an 18th-century church, but thirty stories up in the air—definitely the only Colonial tower in the Downtown skyline.



Mural photos courtesy of The Bank of New York

Top: Two of the murals in the main banking hall; *Foreign Trade* shows a ship's captain, manifest in hand, disembarking, while his ship is secured at the East River docks. *National Credit 1861* symbolically represents the financial backing The Bank of New York lent the federal government during the Civil War—the classical building in the background was the old Custom House at 26 Wall Street, today's Federal Hall.



Photograph by Alan Schindler

Left: Twin curving staircases with decorative wrought-iron railings lead from the building's entrance foyer up to the grand former banking hall, which now serves as an elegant backdrop for the Museum of American Finance.



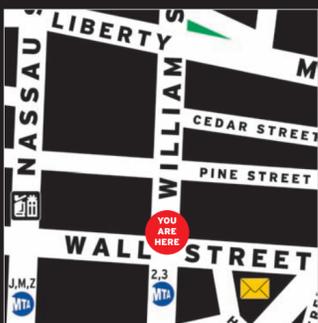
Collection of the Museum of American Finance

Left bottom: The earliest known photograph of Wall Street, taken c. 1860 from the deck of a ship at the South Street docks on the East River, shows the famous vista closed by Trinity Church at Broadway. In the pre-skyscraper era, Trinity Church towered above The Street's commercial buildings—while today it is dwarfed by its neighbors.



SwigEquities

#### Also in the Neighborhood



#### More Downtown Museums:

**Federal Hall National Memorial**  
26 Wall Street

**Fraunces Tavern Museum**  
54 Pearl Street

**Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust**  
18 First Place, Battery Park City

**New York City Police Museum**  
100 Old Slip

**New York Unearthed**  
17 State Street

**Skyscraper Museum**  
39 Battery Place

**Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian**  
1 Bowling Green

**South Street Seaport Museum**  
12 Fulton Street

**Sports Museum of America**  
26 Broadway



The mission of the Alliance for Downtown New York is to be the principal organization that provides Lower Manhattan's historic financial district with a premier physical and economic environment, advocates for businesses and property owners and promotes the area as a world-class destination for companies, workers, residents and visitors.

The Downtown Alliance manages the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Business Improvement District (BID), serving an area roughly from City Hall to the Battery, from the East River to West Street.

Alliance for Downtown New York, Inc.  
120 Broadway, Suite 3340  
New York, NY 10271  
Tel 212.566.6700 Fax 212.566.6707  
www.DowntownNY.com

Looking for more information about Downtown? Stop by the visitor information kiosks at City Hall Park, the Staten Island Ferry Terminal, the PATH station, and 1 World Financial Center, and be sure to stop at our Heritage Site Markers located throughout the neighborhood.

Also, don't miss our FREE Wall Street Walking Tour! This 90-minute guided walking tour weaves together the history, events, architecture and people of Downtown. The tour meets every Thursday and Saturday at noon at the front steps of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green. For more information, please call 212.606.4064.