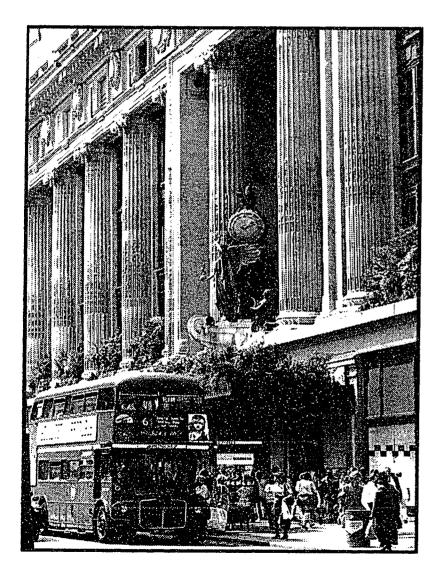
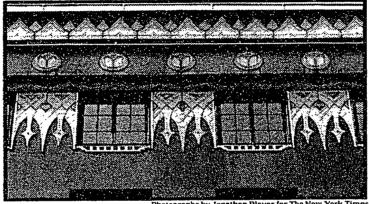
New York Signature On London Landmarks





ABOVE Detail from Palladium House, by Raymond Hood.

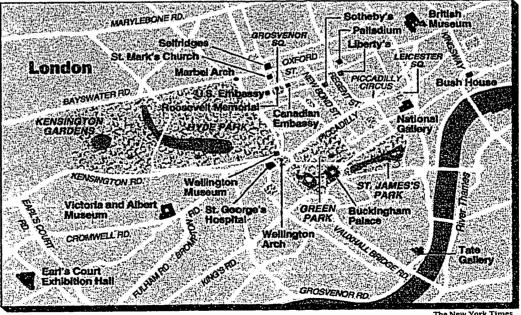
LEFT Selfridges, by the Chicago architect Daniel Burnham.

By ANTHONY W. ROBINS

TOPPING by an A.T.M., you insert your Chemical Bank card and withdraw some cash. Moving on down the sidewalk, you pass in quick succession the Gap, Benetton and the French Connection. Tucked in among the upscale Italian and French restaurants are a McDonald's and a Burger King. In this the Upper West Side? No, it's London, 1992.

Where once the path of influence between London and New York seemed strictly one way, today it runs both ways, and the two great English-speaking cities seem closer than ever. Nor are chain stores and fast-food outlets the only evidence - architecture too has been internationalized. London buildings by contemporary American architects range from Cesar Pelli's Canary Wharf, which declared bankruptcy in May and is less than half finished, to Robert Venturi's Sainsbury wing at the National Gallery. It was the initial proposal for the wing, submitted by the

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British firm of Ahrends, Burton & Koralek, that prompted Prince Charles's much-quoted remark about a "carbuncle on the face of a much-loved friend" - how remarkable that his call for a return to the traditional in English architecture should result in a design by an American.

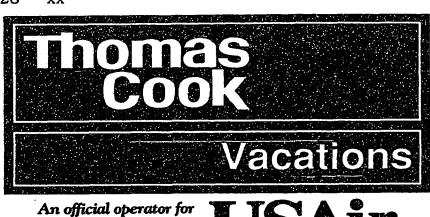
Could such things have happened in the old days, before the English did away with shillings and half-crowns, the Yorkshire ridings and most of its red telephone booths? Surely imperial London had no need to import American architects? Well, not many, and not often, but the phenomenon is not entirely new. Today not quite a dozen major older buildings by New York architects can be found in the other capital of the Englishspeaking world. By chance, they can all be visited en route to favorite spots in London. and today's New Yorker may be surprised to discover that some oh-so-typical London sites are in fact cousins of very familiar friends back home.

A visit to New York in London begins in the West End, home of Georgian squares, small museums, theaters and large department stores. Selfridges, one of the major department stores, is a frequent destination of American tourists, in the heart of the West End on Oxford Street, near Marble Arch and Hyde Park. Department stores like Selfridges seem such an English institution that we sometimes forget they are an American invention.

Harry Gordon Selfridge was an American, a protégé of Marshall Field of Chicago, and he took the concept to London in 1908. He also took the Chicago architect Daniel Burnham with him to build his new store - one of the largest in Europe at the time. Still imposing with its giant order of Ionic columns marching down Oxford Street, Selfridges is a typically turn-of-the-century American Beaux-Arts design, built just six years after Burnham's more eccentric Flatiron Building at 23d Street and Broadway in New York.

Crossing Oxford Street from Selfridges, a visitor continues down North Audley Street into Grosvenor Square, the largest of the squares of the Mayfair district, and now the official center of the American presence in London. Laid out in the 1720's, Grosvenor Square was once a genteel enclave of Georgian houses surrounding a park, but today

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London's New York Look

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little is left from earlier times. The entire western side is now taken up by the American Embassy, a modern building (1958-61) by the American architect Eero Saarinen that looks thoroughly out of place. Saarinen's equally modern but less alien work in New York includes the gray granite tower housing CBS headquarters on the Avenue of the Americas ("Black Rock"), the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center, and the wonderful poured-concrete butterfly that is the T.W.A. terminal at Kennedy International Airport.

More in keeping with the original character of Grosvenor Square is the smaller, gentler Georgian Revival building on the eastern side, at Nos. I and 2. Home to the Canadian Embassy, it was built to house the United States Embassy in 1937 by 20th-century America's master of classical styles, John Russell Pope.

Though best known for his monuments in Washington, Pope was also active in New York, where his work includes the library annex of the Frick Collection and the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial at the American Museum of Natural History, both also dating from the mid-1930's. Grosvenor Square's American connections. incidentally, date to the earliest years of the Republic: in 1785 John Adams, serving as the American Ambassador before becoming the country's second President, lived at No. 9, one of the few surviving Georgian-era buildings on the square.

Today Grosvenor Square is firmly claimed for the United States by a statue of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower on a small traffic island in front of the embassy, and the much larger Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in the heart of Grosvenor Square

ROSVENOR Street leads east, down past the Canadian Embassy, from Grosvenor Square to the gallery-lined Bond Street (a block down which stands the original Sotheby's, which later merged with New York's Parke-Bernet Galleries), and continues as Maddox Street to Regent Street, a grand curving promenade of luxury shops.

Directly across Regent Street, one's eye is caught by Liberty's, creator of epochal design trends (Art Nouveau is still known in Italy and elsewhere as the Liberty style). Maddox continues as Great Malborough, and on this side-street, a block in from Regent Street and across from Liberty's, sits an extraordinary black and gold office building, once known as Ideal House and now called Palladium House. If the dramatic color scheme and stylized floral patterns remind you of New York in the 1920's, it may be because the building was designed in 1928 by New York's master of '20s modernism, Raymond Hood. Hood's first New York skyscraper was the American Radiator Building of 1924 on West 40th Street, a black and gold creation opposite Bryant Park.

Palladium House was originally built to house the English branch of the same enterprise: the National Radiator Company.

Regent Street (now graced, incidentally, with a Disney Store, and a Gap in one corner of the Liberty's building) swings down into Piccadilly Circus, London's counterpart to Times Square. Coventry Street leads east into Leicester Square, a conspic-

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The Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery by Robert Venturi.

uously tawdry part of the Soho entertainment center (London's Soho takes its name from a hunting call, New York's SoHo from a planners' acronym for South of Houston.)

Among the half-dozen or so movie theaters on the square sits the Empire Theatre. Built in 1884 as a music hall, it was converted for movies in 1927 by New York's own master movie-palace builder, Thomas Lamb. Though the Empire was altered yet again in the 1960s, Lamb's Venetianstyle facade can still be seen above the marquee.

Among Lamb's surviving New York movie palaces (he was the preferred architect of the American movie palace magnate Marcus Loew) are the Hollywood (later the Mark Hellinger Theater, a legitimate house, and now the Times Square Church, on West 51st Street, off Broadway); the fabulous former Loew's 175th Street (now the headquarters of the Rev. Ike); and a theater generally credited with being the very first movie palace in the world: Venetian-style building now houses the First Corinthian Baptist Church, but it was built in 1913, on Seventh Avenue at 116 Street, as the

Doubling back to Piccadilly Circus, look south along Haymarket for a glimpse of McDonald's, now merely one of the many dozen fast-food outlets that have driven the English Wimpy chain from the scene, but 20 years ago the capital's first.

Continuing westward on Piccadilly, you will pass St. James's, a Christopher Wren church; Leopold Stokowski served as organist here before emigrating to America, where one of his first jobs was organist at St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue.

loward the end Piccagilly stands the fabulous Ritz Hotel, in whose lobby can be experienced one of the few authentic English teatime rituals left in London. Pausing under the hotel's grand arcade, surveying Piccadilly, with Green Park to the left leading down to Buckingham Palace, you might notice across the street a staid stone-faced office block.

Called Devonshire House, it seems

remarkably reminiscent of 1920's office buildings in New York. The similarities may be traced to the building's design, in 1924, by Carrere & Hastings, grand Beaux-Arts masters whose gifts to New York include the Public Library on Fifth Avenue at 42d Street and, in collaboration with Emery Roth, New York's own Ritz Tower on 57th Street and Park Avenue.

A pleasant stroll westward on Piccadilly (or parallel to it through Green Park) brings us to Hyde Park Corner, the needle's eye between Hyde and Green Park that is now one of London's nastier traffic intersections. Apsley House, in its center, former residence of the Duke of Wellington, is now the Wellington Museum; nearby stand both the early 19thcentury Wellington Arch and a grand equestrian statue of the hero of Waterloo. To the west are Knightsbridge, Brompton Road, Harrods, and, farther on, the Victoria and Albert Museum. Opposite Hyde Park Corner, St. George's Hospital stands on the site of a grandly conceived but never built American projects.

HE proposal for the site, in 1933, called for the development of an English counterpart to New York's Radio City Music Hall, to be named the International Music Hall and Opera House, and designed by three Americans: Raymond Hood, Harvey Wiley Corbett, and C. Howard Crane. Corbett and Hood were then both deeply involved with the development of Rockefeller Center, including Radio City Music Hall. Crane, an expatriate living in England, specialized in theater design; his previous American work included two of New York's handsomest Broadway theatoday the Virginia) on West 52d Street, and the Music Box, on West 46th Street, built for Irving Berlin's Music Box Revues - and the longgone, 4,000-seat Brooklyn Fox movie palace. Samuel (Roxy) Rothafel, cre-

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ator of Radio City, might also have been involved in the London project. The International Music Hall was never built, and St. George's still stands, but drawings for the proposal survive and were part of a loan exhibition from the Royal Institute of British Architects at the Drawing Center in SoHo some years ago.

Although neither version of his Music Hall project was built, Crane did leave in London one enormous theater-like building: the Earl's Court Exhibition Hall in West London, built in 1937. The equivalent of today's American convention centers, the Exhibition Hall was designed to seat 30,000 visitors. The hall is opposite the Warwick Street entrance of the Earl's Court Underground station. Alternatively, it can be reached on foot through South Kensington, down Earl's Court Road and along any of several West London terraces. An enormous triangular building, it sits over 12 acres of railroad tracks, its main entrance through a monolithic curving facade with enormous block letters spelling out Earls Court in capital letters, and adorned with stylized symbolic metalic reliefs.

A final monument to American influence can be seen on a visit to some of the West End theaters or Covent Garden. Stroll along the curve of Aldwych and where Aldwych meets Kingsway, not far from the Waldorf Hotel, there looms Bush House (1925-32)

A monumental office block designed by Helmle & Corbett, the firm of Harvey Wiley Corbett, it was completed just before he tried to design a Radio City Music Hall for London. Bush House was built as an English venture of the Bush Terminal in Brooklyn. Helmle & Corbett built the quarters, Bush Tower, in 1918; it still stands on West 42d Street between the Avenue of the Americas and Seventh Avenues. As an appropriate symbol of the American connection, an inscription on the mighty columned entryway of London's Bush House proclaims its dedication, "To the Friendship of English Speaking





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