

# New York Signature On London Landmarks

By ANTHONY W. ROBINS

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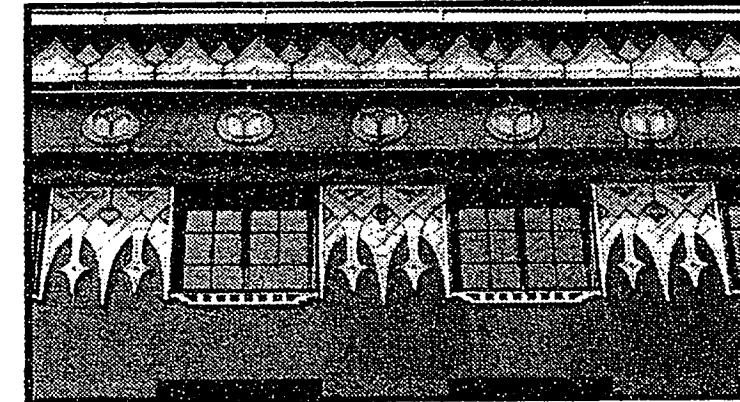
British firm of Ahrends, Burton & Koralek, that prompted Prince Charles's much-quoted remark about a "carbuncle on the face of a much-loved friend" — how remarkable that his call for a return to the traditional in English architecture should result in a design by an American.

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 English-speaking 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.

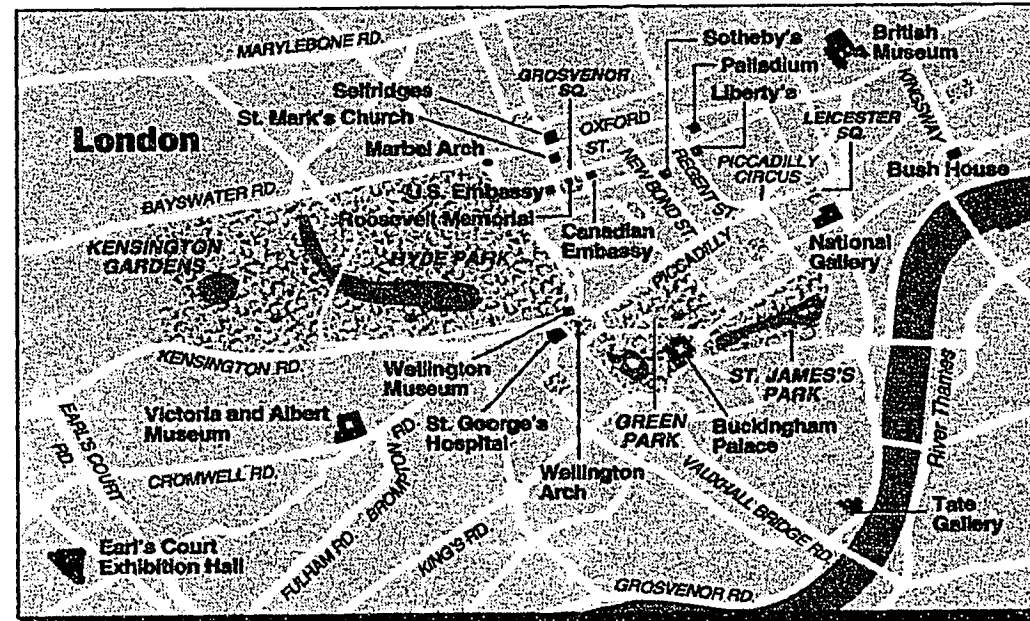
Crossing Oxford Street from Selfridges, a visitor continues down North Audley Street into Grosvenor Square, the largest of the squares of the Mayfair district, and now the official center of the American presence in London. Laid out in the 1720's, Grosvenor Square was once a genteel enclave of Georgian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



Photographs by Jonathan Player for The New York Times

ABOVE Detail from Palladium House, by Raymond Hood.

LEFT Selfridges, by the Chicago architect Daniel Burnham.



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