

Real Estate Weekly

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Seaboard restores Liberty St. landmark

Seaboard Weatherproofing and Restoration Company has been tapped by Cooper Square Realty, the management agent of 55 Liberty Street (a.k.a. Liberty Tower), New York City, to restore the exterior of the 97-year-old, 33-story building. The multi-million dollar restoration project is expected to be complete in about one year.

Liberty Tower was once home to the Sinclair Oil Company, a major player in the Teapot Dome Scandal that would forever link the Presidency of Warren G. Harding to big business bribery and corruption.

Constructed in 1910 and designed by architect Henry Ives Cobb, the building's English Gothic Revival design and small floor plate create a very slender and elegant profile, indicative of many of the tall structures built in the early 20th Century. By the early 1920s, Liberty Tower had become home to the Sinclair Oil Company. While owner Harry F. Sinclair was working here, President Harding's secretary of the interior, Albert B. Fall, leased the oil fields of Teapot Dome, Wyoming exclusively to Sinclair without any

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competitive bidding.

In 1979, long after Sinclair and his nefarious deals had faded away, architect Joseph Pell Lombardi decided to convert the Liberty Tower office building into cooperative residential housing with 87 apartments.

Recently, Seaboard Weatherproofing began the restoration of Liberty Tower's approximately 2,000 white terracotta stones, gargoyles, and other ornamental figures that make up the building's façade. The project involves replacing or repairing the stones that have begun to fade or crack due to aging or weathering. In addition to repairing and replacing stones and ornaments, Seaboard will be adding a permanent rigging system to Liberty Tower.

"Because the copper roof is pitched, it's difficult to hang a platform down every time a restoration needs to be done," said Seaboard project manager Jeff Smith. "We would normally have to build scaffolds or erect mast climbers that rise from the ground up when performing a new restoration. The new, permanent beams will be mounted on the 29th floor and will be very inconspicuous, protruding only three feet from the building. It makes it much easier to hang platforms from here for current and future restoration work."

According to Emporis Buildings, the world's largest publicly available database on architec-

tural and building data, Liberty Tower is the 379th tallest building in New York City at 385 feet.

Because the building is a New York City landmark, Seaboard must maintain the integrity of the original architecture and the Landmarks Preservation Commission will be reviewing the entire process to ensure this is done.

"We're very excited about the entire project for more reasons than one," Smith said. "Liberty Tower has been such a rich piece of New York City history for nearly a century. To keep it looking great makes us feel great."



The historic facade at 55 Liberty Street.