



TO SAVE A SALOON: Artist's rendering of 45-story office building planned for 919 Third Avenue, which will be built around P. J. Clarke's saloon, lower left, a picturesque landmark. The office building, between 55th and 56th Streets, will be a center for the carpet industry.

New Skyscraper Will Preserve P. J. Clarke's on Third Avenue

By THOMAS W. ENNIS

In one of the most unusual Manhattan real estate transactions in recent years, a 45-story skyscraper will be built around a Third Avenue landmark—P. J. Clarke's bar and restaurant—to preserve it.

Clarke's, one of the city's most popular drinking and eating places, is among the last of the old Irish bars for which Third Avenue was well known before the post-World War building boom transformed the avenue, with office buildings and apartment houses.

The usually touchy problem of the preservation of a picturesque building will cause no pain to the principals involved. In this case, Clarke's will be preserved in a large plaza area and the skyscraper will rise without interference behind it. The owner of Clarke's, Daniel H. Lavezzo Jr., will thus be able to maintain a thriving business, which he believes has the most varied restaurant clientele in New York.

Package Assembled

Clarke's, on the northeast corner of Third Avenue and 55th Street, is one of a number of properties on the east side of the avenue between 55th and 56th Streets being assembled by the Tishman Realty and Construction Company.

Tishman, a New York based concern, which is active nationally, is currently building a 40-story skyscraper on the blockfront just south of Clarke's, the blockfront between 54th and 55th Streets. The building, which will be known as 909 Third Avenue, will have the Franklin D. Roosevelt branch of the post office on its first four floors.

The building, which will be a blockfront between 55th and 56th Streets will be known as the Carpet Center. About 21 carpet concerns have leased the space in the structure, which is scheduled for occupancy in 1969.

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill are the architects of the new skyscraper. Clarke's, with its eighteenth-nineties interior intact, will be in its own building, about where it is now, in

a corner of the broad plaza that will surround the skyscraper on three sides.

While relinquishing ownership of his Third Avenue corner, Mr. Lavezzo, who is also an antiques dealer, negotiated a 99-year lease on the property. He also retains a large financial interest in the property, holding a purchase money mortgage of \$1.2-million, which is part of the corner's purchase price of the site. The total price paid by the Tishman interest for the corner, according to real estate men, was about \$1.5-million. It is estimated that at least \$4.5-million has been spent so far to acquire the entire blockfront.

The saloon was acquired in 1904 by Patrick Joseph Clarke, a native of County Leitrim, Ireland, and operated by him as a highly respectable Irish pub until his death at the age of 63 in the early nineteen-forties. Mr. Clarke never owned the saloon property.

The corner was bought in 1949 by Mr. Lavezzo who put in dining rooms at the rear of the saloon, which is just about the same today as it was when Mr. Clarke was saloonkeeper.

Some property owners who were not as lucky as Mr. Lavezzo have resisted the blandishments of encroaching builders and have had buildings put up around them.

Rockefeller Center has two well-known examples of hold-outs. The Rockefeller interests got all the land needed for the center when it was planned in the nineteen thirties except for two small corner parcels.

One parcel was a plot about 20 feet wide on the northeast corner of 49th Street and the Avenue of the Americas, and the other was the southeast corner of 50th Street and the avenue.

As the years passed the owners' resistance weakened and the owners of Rockefeller Center acquired the corner sites, which are occupied by a saloon on the 49th Street corner, and a drug store on the 50th Street corner.