

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name General Electric Building

other names/site number Radio Corporation of America (RCA-Victor) Building; Tower 570

### 2. Location

street & number 570 Lexington Avenue [ ] not for publication

city or town New York [ ] vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10022

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

M. J. Costa, SEPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title

12/03/03  
Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register  
[ ] see continuation sheet  
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register  
[ ] see continuation sheet  
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register

[ ] removed from the National Register

[ ] other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

For  
Signature of the Keeper

1/38/04  
date of action

Edson H. Beall

General Electric Building

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

#### Contributing

1

#### Noncontributing

0

buildings  
sites  
structures  
objects  
**TOTAL**

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick; terra cotta; marble

roof concrete deck with built-up membrane

other metal; aluminum; copper

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)



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## 7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The General Electric Building at 570 Lexington Avenue is a fifty-story Art Deco-style office building, designed by the firm of Cross & Cross and built between 1929 and 1931. It is located in mid-town Manhattan at the southwest corner of the block bounded by Lexington Avenue, East 51st Street, Park Avenue, and East 50th Street. The building faces the street at its east and north facades – Lexington Avenue, where the main entrance is located, and East 51st Street. The west lot line façade abuts and rises above the rear façade of St. Bartholomew's Church (NR-listed 4-16-80), while a modern office building rises against the first twenty-five stories of the south façade. The General Electric Building's slender tower, which begins at the twenty-sixth floor and stands clear of all adjacent structures, is one of midtown's most distinctive office spires. During the building's design and early construction phases, the Radio Corporation of America (then also known as RCA-Victor), an affiliate of General Electric (GE), was the client. The building's elaborate ornamentation represents designer John Cross's attempt to make concrete the ephemeral world of "wireless" communication and RCA's role in it. The electric-bolt and wave motifs he employed were ultimately equally appropriate for GE, which officially acquired the building almost a year before construction was completed at the end of 1931. The General Electric Building's carefully considered massing, well-detailed masonry, sensitivity to the design of the adjacent church, dramatic lobby, and exemplary metal and terra cotta ornament make it one of New York city's finest expressions of the Art Deco style.

The building is in excellent condition and retains much of its original character. Its exterior masonry and decorative features retain a high degree of historic integrity. Some alterations were made over the years, but none of these have greatly diminished the overall character of the building's exterior. Alterations include the replacement of the historic storefronts and windows, the installation of exterior lighting, the infill of one storefront bay on East 51st Street, and the installation of several HVAC louvers. The lobby also retains a great deal of its original character; its historic features and finishes were restored in 1995. Three new chandeliers, several replacement doors, a new security desk, and a decorative screen were installed at that time; otherwise the lobby now very closely resembles its original appearance. The elevator cabs were also refurbished in 1995, including the restoration of their original curved ceilings (which had been hidden), the retention of historic white metal lights and railings, and the installation of new wood paneling. Original spaces such as the auditorium in the basement and the executive dining rooms on the 48th and 49th floors were completely remodeled at an unknown date and do not retain any historic features. Elevator lobbies at the basement and some upper floors retain their original terrazzo floors and/or marble wall cladding, but these features were originally of a more utilitarian design than the high-style design of the lobby. In some locations, the original terrazzo is extant, but covered with carpeting.

<sup>1</sup> Many portions of this section are taken directly, or in edited form, from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's *General Electric Building Designation Report* (LP-1412), prepared by Charles C. Savage, July 9, 1985.

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Exterior Description

The General Electric Building is composed in a manner that minimizes the traditional differentiation between base and shaft seen in many of the period's tall buildings. The twelve-story base, which occupies the entire lot, supports a series of shallow setbacks at the two street facades that ultimately rise to the twenty-fifth floor, from which the slender tower emerges and rises another twenty-five floors, culminating in a flamboyant crown that completes this sense of vertical movement. Cross & Cross eradicated the visual and physical divisions typically found between these parts of the building by bringing the vertical piers that rise up the facades all the way to grade level, without a change in material or detailing. The uniformity of the material and color palettes employed from the street to the crown also reduces the sense of division between each part. Warm, reddish hues were specified for the building's short granite base course and the marble surrounds at the storefronts and door openings. The brick used extensively at all building facades has a color range that harmonizes not only with the building's own marble and terra cotta, but also with the brick of St. Bartholomew's Church (1919), immediately adjacent to the west. This represents an important, and rare, early example of contextual urban design. The brick used for General Electric has a range of three different colors (orange, buff, and a tawny color), is laid in American bond with narrow joints, and has a random placement that creates the illusion of yet an overall fourth color, a rich bronze. Cross & Cross specified that rounded brick be used at most corners. Rounded bricks were also used to articulate the faces of the masonry piers, creating incised vertical lines running up the piers that further emphasize the building's verticality. Glazed terra cotta is also used extensively, including at all spandrels, copings, sills, corbels, imposts, and the tracery and finials at the crown. Metallic glazes are used to highlight (perhaps "electrify") specific portions of the terra cotta. The raised diamond shapes at the center of most of the spandrels have an aluminized finish, as do the entire face of the spandrels between the 45th and 48th floors. The tracery at the building's crown is especially evident when illuminated at night.

The building possesses a highly successful blending of articulation and ornament. Indeed, the ornament helps establish the building's relentless vertical dynamism - at the base as well as at the top. Flashing rays, electrical discharges, and attenuated, anthropomorphic figures that seemingly represent "spirits" which, like radio waves, cannot be seen or felt, become repeated motifs. Beginning over the storefronts at the base, these continue up the setbacks, which feature larger "spirits" at several locations, and finally burst out at the crown, which features four multi-story, shrouded figures with coronas of long metal rays. The bolts, swirls, and spikes of the crown's terra cotta and its pointed copper finials provide a suitable backdrop for these dramatic figures.

The building's decorative program begins at a relatively small scale at street level. The Lexington Avenue façade features two large show windows on each side of the building's relatively narrow main entrance, along with a narrow, open bay at its north end leading to the porticoed entry of the corner commercial space. The 51st Street façade has a corresponding open portico bay at its east end, two large show windows on each side of a narrower show window, one bay of infill masonry at the location of a former show window, and the freight entrance. Each ground-level opening is framed with a red marble surround consisting of reeded jambs and triangular pediments. These elements project only slightly from the face



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of the brick piers. The pediments above the show windows have an angular geometry composed of three elements, beginning with a broad, triangular tympanum of angular fluting, continuing through a broad stepped pediment, and culminating at their centers with a carved electric bolt and a niche containing a stylized "electric spirit". The pediments over the main entrance, the two openings leading to the commercial space at the corner, and at the freight entrance on 51st Street are each emphasized with more sculptural and ornamental detail. The pediment over the freight entrance is also distinguished by being round rather than triangular. The building's brick piers rise from between, and directly above, each of the doorway and window openings.

The main entryway contains three single-leaf doors with simple white metal frames that have pushplates with a cutout zigzag motif that is also found on the doors in the entry vestibule and the lobby. A tall transom window rises above the doors and features a white metal grille that establishes a motif of intertwined curves and angles that is used for other grilles inside the lobby. The two narrow, open bays on either side of the building's northeast corner form a portico, under which the entrance to the corner commercial space is located on a splayed wall. A revolving door, flanked by two single-leaf doors, provide access to the space, which can also be entered from the lobby. The doorway at the freight entrance, which has a white metal sculpture of a stylized bird in the niche above it, has a plain double-leaf painted metal door.

Cross & Cross clearly decided to make the building's northeast corner its focal point when viewed from the street. It has a much more emphatic and eye-catching design than even the main entryway. This emphasis begins at ground level and continues up to the beginning of the tower. The marble pediments over the two bays flanking the corner are triangular in form, like the others, but have a half-round head at their peak that is echoed by the arcuated brickwork behind them. Their round-headed niches are each filled with a sculpture of a clenched fist holding a zigzagging white metal bolt rising upward. The corner pier that supports the portico receives the most elaborate treatment. A series of progressively wider, round-headed marble buttresses rise from the corner in shallow relief, culminating in a round-faced clock bearing the GE logo. Two white metal sculptures of forearms with clenched fists project forward from above the clock. They hold more zigzagging white metal bolts that serve as a shade for the light that illuminates the clock. A series of brick buttresses with flat or pointed tops rise above the portico's marble along the corner's central pier, terminating above the third floor windows. These buttresses, while structurally useless, serve to draw the pedestrian's eye up from street level toward the tower's crown, which might otherwise go unnoticed.

The emphasis Cross & Cross placed on the northeast corner continues up the entire façade. The corner is curved between the second and twelfth floors, with the spandrels and window sash at the two corner bays following the curve. Between the twelfth and twenty-first floors, it is given a flat chamfer. The northeast corner of the tower begins above this point (the tower's starting point differs from corner to corner). Unlike the other corners of the tower, however, which are chamfered from their beginning, the northeast corner begins with a ninety-degree angle for its first ten stories after which it becomes chamfered. The effect of this composition is to further increase the building's sense of verticality when viewed from the



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corner. Three of the building's stylized, sculpted human figures – more “electric spirits” – are placed one above the other at this corner to reassure the eye that it is following the correct path upward. A face with a prow-like headdress looks out from above the twelfth story parapet, a stylized face with a long double flash is on the splay between the twenty-third and twenty-fifth stories, and a double visage looks out from between the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth floors. This complex articulation is typical of the attention Cross & Cross's tall office building designers paid to detail.

Cross & Cross contrived an aesthetic solution for the massing requirements specified by the city's well-known Zoning Resolution of 1916, which attempted to prevent Manhattan's streets from becoming vertical canyons. Continuing the sense of “buttressing” first expressed at the ground-floor corner, the setbacks are arranged in a manner that visually buttresses the building's tower. There are two major buttresses, one above and aligned with the Lexington Avenue entrance, the other aligned with the five central ground floor bays below on 51st Street. Each of these is effected by massing three-story, stepped pyramids -- in increments of two or sometimes just a single story -- at each of the five major setbacks on the Lexington Avenue facade and the four on East 51st Street. This arrangement would not have worked as successfully as it does here had the designers not stressed the building's height by emphasizing the pier and recessed spandrel articulation. The chamfered corners of the tower help de-emphasize its mass and enhance its sense of height. As at the corner, stylized visages look down to the street from the central piers on both the north and east facades.

The terra-cotta spandrels, though recessed between the piers, enhance the building's upward thrust. Though not all of them are alike, the majority has an identical pattern. A large chevron dominates the typical spandrel's upper region. It is molded as angular fluting, though finer than the show window tympana. A pair of chevrons, each half the size of the larger upper chevron and of even finer angular fluting, occupies the spandrel's lower region. These determined verticals and diagonals are somewhat relieved by the tracery at the top of each spandrel that is similar to, but more fluid than, the window and ventilation grilles above the entry doors and in the lobby. Superimposed over this pattern is a single electrical bolt, an attenuated diamond on end, which generally retains some of its original aluminized finish. The spandrels at the curved corner through the twelfth floor have a different pattern, with three progressively larger diamond shapes, the largest and topmost of which has an aluminized finish. The spandrels between the forty-fifth and forty-eighth floors of the tower are also different, with raised circles at their centers and a completely aluminized finish. The building's wider window openings originally had three-over-three double-hung metal windows, with two-over-two sash placed in the narrower openings near the center of the north and east facades. The replacement windows now in place maintain this configuration through the twenty-fifth floor, while the windows in the tower are now one-over-one.

The crown is the magnificent culmination of the building's relentless upward articulation. The round-headed buttresses first seen at ground level are repeated at the top of each chamfered corner, providing visual support for the crown above. Four round arches spring across the wider tower facades from its narrow chamfered corners. The effect of these curves is to also visually support the crown, while providing a smooth termination point for the tower's piers and window bays. The central pier of each

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wide façade, however, shoots through the top of each arch and supports one of the four monumental allegorical deities that preside over the building and, like radio waves, the city. The rays that emanate from their heads are cast aluminum and designed for neon lighting installation with access for replacement and maintenance. The central piers extend up behind the deities and become the terra-cotta pinnacles between which the terra-cotta tracery, an intersecting web of curves and counter-curves, is spun. At the top of each section of tracery, the upraised fists first seen fifty floors below raise their electric bolts to the sky.

Exterior Alterations

Little is known about early alterations to the exterior facades of the General Electric Building prior to several work campaigns begun sometime in the 1970s. The change of ownership from RCA to GE that occurred during the building's construction appears to have had little impact on its final design. The clock face at the northeast corner pier was originally intended to bear the RCA logo – whether this was installed and then replaced with the GE logo (which is extant), or was never installed at all, is not known. All other ornamentation originally intended for RCA was retained and became GE-related by default.

Some masonry work appears to be of relatively recent vintage, but no certain dates are currently known. This work includes the infill of the storefront bay adjacent to the freight entrance on East 51st Street with brick and several areas of replacement brick visible from the street on the east and north facades. The replacement brick at the infilled and repaired areas is a good match to the overall color of the façade brick, but does not have the full range of colors used originally. The extent of similar repairs at the lot-line facades and the upper floors is not known.

The historic storefronts were replaced with simple aluminum-and-glass storefronts with red granite bulkheads sometime before 1975 (the existing storefronts are visible in photographs published in that year and appear to date to around that time). The replacement storefronts were fitted within the historic openings. In the mid-1980s, the building underwent a total window replacement at the 2nd through 49th floors. New double-hung metal windows were installed within the historic openings. Three-over-three and, in some bays, two-over-two windows were installed at the base and one-over-one windows were installed at the shaft. The historic configuration was maintained at all windows in the base, including the curved sash at the northeast corner, but the historic three-over-three configuration at the shaft was not used and one-over-one windows were installed instead.

GE sold its headquarters building in the mid-1990s and, in a multi-decade game of building tag, moved to the former RCA building in Rockefeller Center. The new owners of the General Electric Building (subsequently re-christened as "Tower 570") made a number of changes at this time that affected the appearance of the ground floor. New Art Deco-style light fixtures were installed on each pier (except at the corner) at both street facades. These fixtures are of white metal matching the building's historic white metal ornamentation and have star-shaped escutcheon plates that appear to be based on the historic flagpole escutcheon over the main entrance. Brackets hold the fixtures away from the wall and tiered cut-



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glass pendants diffuse their light. In further acknowledgment of the building's style, an opaque Art Deco-style graphic was applied to the glass of the narrow sidelights that flank several of the display windows.

The three white metal doors at the main entrance appear to be either original or, possibly, later replicas – they are identical to extant historic interior doors leading to areas off the main lobby. One of the existing doors was modified during the mid-1990s work to allow for an automatic opener to provide access for the disabled. The revolving door leading into the former bank space at the corner does not appear to be original, but its date of installation is not known. The leaded glass in the round window opening above this door that is mentioned in the 1985 Landmarks Preservation Commission's Designation Report is no longer in place. The paired metal doors at the freight entrance are not original and were installed during either the 1980s or the 1990s.

Interior Description

The quality of the detailing and materials found on the building's exterior extends into its lobby, which today retains much of its original appearance. Several ancillary spaces at the ground floor and basement also retain original features and finishes, though none are as lavish as the lobby's. Other spaces, such as the original auditorium and dining rooms, are completely renovated, leaving no trace of their original appearance. In addition, some office floors still have their original terrazzo elevator lobby floors and, less frequently, marble wall cladding. Many floors have been completely remodeled and retain no original features.

*Lobby*

The lobby consists of a small, square entry vestibule approximately as wide as the Lexington Avenue entry doors, and a large, rectangular lobby of the same width that extends to the west. The entry vestibule is separated from the lobby proper by a full-height wall. The vestibule's floor is of polished granite with a warm light brown tone. Its walls have a short base of the same red granite used for the base at the exterior, and its walls are clad with the same red marble used for the exterior door and storefront surrounds. The carved reeding used at the exterior continues at the vestibule walls. Each sidewall has four openings fitted with radiator grilles. The openings, which are shaped like tall rectangles with pointed, triangular tops, are filled with decorative white metal grilles backed with wire mesh. The design of the grilles is similar, but not identical, to that of the grille at the transom over the exterior entry doors, and continues its motif of interconnected curves and angles. A short frieze runs along the top of the vestibule's sidewalls. It consists of a mosaic bordered at top and bottom by narrow bands of beige marble. The mosaic consists of two parallel running wave motifs, with a round wave rolling below an angular zigzag wave – both continuing the building's symbolic program. The frieze on each wall is interrupted at two points by blocks of light-colored stone that project slightly from the wall with an upward curve. These stones serve as light reflectors for the torch-shaped white metal sconces attached to the marble below the friezes. The smooth, barrel-vaulted plaster ceiling springs from the top of the friezes on either side of the vestibule; it is finished with silver leaf. An Art Deco-style chandelier hangs from the top of the vault; it is basically an enlarged version of the mid-1990s exterior light fixtures (several more hang from the lobby ceiling – all were installed in the mid-1990s). A set of non-original white metal doors separates

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the vestibule from the lobby. These span the width of the space and consist of a central revolving door flanked by single-leaf doors. A tall transom window flanked by reeded marble panels rises from the top of the doors to the ceiling vault. The transom has tall, narrow sash units, both fixed and operable, that create a stepped pyramid pattern rising to the center of the ceiling. Another white metal grille covers this transom; it maintains the curves and angles of the exterior and radiator grilles, but has a different pattern.

The lobby is a subtly dramatic space that continues and expands upon the design elements first encountered in the vestibule. Within its uniform width, it contains all circulation space, a security desk, two elevator banks, and several openings and doorways on each side and at the rear that lead into various ground-floor ancillary spaces. The walls maintain the carved reeding seen before, but here the material and carving pattern change. The lobby walls are of pink marble that is heavily veined with a darker red. The carved reeds are about twice as wide as the other reeded marbles, giving the walls a softer, almost upholstered look. The short base is of black marble with white veins. The regularly-spaced, torch-shaped sconces and the wave-patterned mosaic frieze first seen in the vestibule continue at the same height for the entire length of the long lobby sidewalls. The frieze stops at the lobby's west wall, which consists of reeded marble rising to meet the barrel-vaulted ceiling. A clock, with an octagonal red marble face (the same marble used outside and at the vestibule) and a white metal frame in the shape of an elongated diamond is centered on this wall above the opening below. The long parts of the diamond at three and six o'clock are infilled with white metal panels that have a raised filigree of foliate shapes that echo the sinuous curves of the lobby grillework. The large, white metal mailbox between elevator doors on the south wall echoes the shape of the radiator grille openings, while its stepped profile recalls the buttresses at the corner pier outside.

The ceiling and its associated wall murals are the lobby's most unique feature. The silver leaf barrel vault introduced at the vestibule runs the entire length of the room. It also springs from the top of the mosaic friezes running along the north and south walls, but here is interrupted by regularly spaced triangular cutouts that pierce through the vault in a way that suggests multiple groin vaults created by series of triangular vaults intersecting the sides of a long barrel vault. Here, however, there are no side vaults. Rather, plaster sidewalls, in plane with the lower walls, rise above the friezes to form triangular wall areas containing painted murals. The cutouts are regularly spaced along the length of the ceiling, with a regular rhythm that coincides with the placement of the elevator doors and wall sconces. Because of these wide cutout openings, the curve of the barrel vault only meets the sidewalls at the relatively narrow area above each light fixture. This creates a highly dynamic composition that provides the sensation that the silver ceiling springs from the light emanating from the sconces. The triangular cutouts on each side of the vault are placed directly across from one another, practically touching at their apexes near the center of the ceiling. Two mural designs alternate between the openings. One consists of concentric circles around a solid center from which arrows and rays emanate. The other has arrows and swords that radiate downward from the triangle's apex. Both of these motifs are painted in silver, with backgrounds of radiating circles or arcs painted in three tones of red. In both cases, triangular borders painted to resemble rope mouldings surround the compositions. This arrow motif is subtly echoed in the ceiling plaster on the sides of each cutout, which have shallow impressions of radiating arrows that are covered with silver leaf



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like the rest of the barrel vault. Three non-original chandeliers, identical to the one in the vestibule, hang symmetrically along the centerline of the barrel vault.

The lobby floor is predominantly terrazzo with a banded pattern of zigzag waves running between the sidewalls and extending the length of the room. The bands alternate between beige and reddish-brown waves. Two long, narrow strips of black marble are inset near each sidewall and run the length of the lobby. Beige marble fills the space between these strips and the wall, extending to the door saddle at each recessed door and elevator opening. A geometric design delineated by narrow strips of black marble is inset at the center of the lobby. A large central square is set on point and infilled with stone mosaic with a black field and a gold border. White metal divider strips running through the square have a pattern similar to that of the radiator grilles. Smaller squares extend on point from each corner of the central square. The two that are on axis with the lobby are composed solely of black marble, while the other two contain black stone tesserae with divider strips like those in the center square.

All openings in the lobby walls are of the same height and have quarter-round jambs with a tighter reeding pattern than is used for the walls. These include all ten elevator openings, several door openings, the two flat-headed archways that oppose each other and open several feet in from the east wall, and a third square-headed archway centered on the far west wall. The simple, painted metal elevator doors open from their centers and are detailed solely with several vertical white metal bands on either side of the center seam. A rectangular panel above each door has white metal bolts that rise from the upper corner of each door and converge above the doors' centers to form a sort of pediment. These "pediments" have diamond-shaped floor indicators (now digital) surrounded at their lower halves by ray-patterned white metal. The area above each pediment that fills out the rectangle consists of a field of flat pink marble with raised white metal having a foliated pattern similar to that found on each side of the clock on the west wall (a similar pattern is found in more abstract form at the top of the terra cotta spandrels outside). Another triangular white metal pediment is placed on the marble above each door opening. Triangular indicator lights at the center of these indicate the next available elevator. The elevator cabs have wood paneled walls with original white metal elements, including the corner lights and the railing. The silver-leafed curved ceilings were recently restored after having been covered over sometime in the past.

The wide opening in the north wall near the lobby entrance opens onto a stairway to the basement with simple marble cladding and a small vestibule in front of the doors leading into the commercial space at the building's northeast corner. A pair of doors, flanked by sidelights, leads into this space (now a restaurant, originally a bank). Like all of the lobby doors, these are of the same design as the exterior lobby doors, with simple white metal frames and pushplates with an openwork angular wave. The wide opening in the south wall directly across the lobby was infilled in 1995 to provide a rear wall for the wood-and-metal Art Deco-style security desk that was installed at the same time. This opening originally led to a waiting room (which is now a retail store with street frontage) and a corridor that led to several businesses that provided services to building tenants. Several single-leaf doors at the west end of the lobby open to ancillary spaces to the north and south. The wide opening at the far west end of the lobby was infilled during the mid-1990s renovation with an Art Deco-style folding screen that was installed to prevent access to the freight

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area at the rear of the lobby. This opening was probably originally accessible from the lobby, as the lobby's terrazzo floor, and even the ceiling treatment, continue beyond the west lobby wall toward the transverse corridor that leads to the freight entrance. The freight corridor itself has relatively high-end finishes for a back-of-house area. Radiator grilles like those in the lobby flank the freight entry doors, and many portions of the walls are clad with marble. Another ancillary area to the south of the west end of the lobby has plain terrazzo floors, original white metal corner sconces and an original stairway leading to the basement.

*Basement*

The basement elevator lobby retains most of its original features. All ten elevators open onto this level because originally there was direct access to the city subway that runs below Lexington Avenue. At some point, the subway entrance was closed and the opening was sealed with a marble-clad wall. Today, the lower lobby is largely unused. Though original, its features and finishes are rather generic, without few of the design flourishes used for the main lobby. The walls are clad with smooth pink marble and the terrazzo floor has a checkerboard pattern that does not allude to the wave motif incorporated in the lobby floor above. The elevators have original indicators that are more elaborate in their design than any other basement features and are not seen elsewhere in the building. A small auditorium is located near the basement lobby. It is original to the building and was once quite elaborate, but now has a plain plaster ceiling that slopes upward from the small stage, plain white walls, and modern theater seating.

*Upper Floors*

The office floors evidently never received the high-end Art Deco treatment used for the building's exterior and public areas. Each floor in the main body of the building originally had an elevator lobby with marble-clad walls and terrazzo floors with an angular wave pattern as found in the main lobby, but with the light and dark colors alternating on the rise and fall of each wave to create a sort of checkerboard pattern superimposed upon the wave. The smaller floors in the tower had smaller elevator lobbies; today the elevators open directly into many of the offices. Many floors have been partially or completely altered over the years, though some retain the terrazzo and/or marble cladding in their elevator lobbies. In some cases, the original floor remains, but has been covered with carpeting. Originally, there were executive dining rooms on the 48th and 49th floors (the building's highest occupiable levels). Like the basement auditorium, these once had high-end features designed by Cross & Cross, but no trace of them remains today.

Interior Alterations

The lobby underwent a significant restoration in 1995; other than this, the dates of previous interior alterations remain unknown. It is clear, however, that significant work has taken place over the years in areas such as the basement auditorium and the executive dining rooms. For the most part, the lobby still retains much of its original appearance. The marble, terrazzo, mosaics, and plaster ceiling are all original. New silver leaf was applied to the ceiling and the painted murals were cleaned and restored. The inner doors at the entry vestibule were replaced with new doors that brought back the original configuration (centered revolving door flanked by single-leaf doors) that was previously altered. Non-original indicator



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signs that were placed above each elevator door were removed and replaced with a strip of reeded white metal (the same metal is found at the new inner lobby doors, at the infill above the two wall openings near those doors, and at the security desk). The elevator cabs were also restored and refurbished. The wood paneling is new, drop ceilings were removed to restore the original curved ceilings, and the original corner light fixtures, railings, and base plates were retained. The folding screen that extends across the west opening also dates to the 1995 work. It replaced a set of doors visible in an undated photograph used in a book published in 1993. Physical evidence, such as the presence of the terrazzo floor and the continuation of the lobby's ceiling treatment, in areas west of this opening suggests that the area to the west of the screen was probably accessible directly from the lobby and considered a public area. The lobby security desk and the infill behind it date to the 1995 restoration. The infilled upper portion of the opposite opening leading to the commercial space is similar to that behind the security desk and probably dates to the same work campaign.

The configuration of a portion of the freight corridor was altered at some point, with new marble-clad walls being built to enclose what were once open storage alcoves. Other alterations in the ancillary spaces off the lobby, such as the construction of the current building management office to the south of the west end of the lobby, have clearly occurred, but their dates are not documented. The basement elevator lobby remains unaltered with the exception of the infilling of the former subway entrance at some point. The date at which the basement auditorium and the executive dining rooms at the 48th and 49th floors were replaced is not known, but none of their original features are visible today. Likewise, a "technologically advanced" conference room designed by Hood and Foulhoux sometime after General Electric took possession of the building is not in evidence today.<sup>2</sup> The office floors have been much altered over the years. With the exception of several intact or partially intact elevator lobbies (as described in the section above), the upper floors do not retain any visible original features or finishes of note.

<sup>2</sup> The conference room is mentioned in Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930*. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1987), footnote 57 on p. 814.

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**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ **A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave
- ☐ **D** a cemetery
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance:**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture**Period of Significance:**1929-1931**Significant Dates:**1929; 1931**Significant Person:**N/A**Cultural Affiliation:**N/A**Architect/Builder:**Cross, John WalterCross, Eliot**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by historic American Building Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☒ Local Government
- ☐ University
- Name of repository: New York City  
Public Library; New York City  
Landmarks Preservation  
Commission



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## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE<sup>3</sup>

### Summary

The General Electric Building, constructed in 1929-31 to create a highly visible image for the fledgling RCA Corporation, has a significant place in the history of architecture in New York City. Designed by the firm of Cross & Cross in the Gothic mode of the Art Deco style which is both symbolic and expressive of the function of the building, this tower is a major example of Art Deco architecture. The massing and articulation of the building, shown through the use of ornament and color is remarkable and laudable; not only does this treatment illustrate the breadth of the Art Deco, but it also gives the General Electric Building exemplary status. Moreover the building is the successful culmination of the Cross & Cross firm's efforts to develop a coherent and cohesive articulation for tall office buildings.

The General Electric Building is significant under National Register criterion C based upon its architectural merit. Its period of significance begins in 1929, when the firm of Cross & Cross started its design work, and ends in 1931, when construction was completed. Today, the building retains most of its original character and remains one of New York City's most distinctive skyscrapers.

The artistry of the building's design and execution make it one of the city's key works of Art Deco architecture, specifically as applied to the tall building. It is the work of a prominent local architectural firm that, while producing work in a variety of stylistic idioms, consistently emphasized the use of ornament to symbolically represent its clients. The General Electric Building is considered by many to be the finest building designed by Cross & Cross, as well as the firm's most successful example of client-specific ornamentation. The building's ornamental program, though designed for the original client, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), was equally suited for the company that occupied the building for over sixty years, General Electric (GE). The waves and bolts that are found throughout the building, as well as the stylized "electric spirits" that watch out from its facades, are readily understandable to the viewer. Today's passersby, not knowing the corporate history behind the building, surely assume that the motifs represent the electricity that powers the GE products with which they are familiar. It is in the lobby, however, that Cross & Cross's desire to express broader meanings through a building's physical structure becomes subtler and more indicative of the reasons for the building's overall aesthetic success. Discussing the lobby, John Cross was quoted as saying that,

...designing this first floor hall was the sort of task at which one borrows nothing consciously from the wealth of the past developments in architectural art, but strikes out into the future as far as imagination can penetrate....Romantic though radio may be, it is at the same time intangible and elusive – a thing which can be captured visually only through symbolism....There is vitality in the aluminum ceiling, and although it is vaulted it is free from any suggestion of past times or places. The severity of the vertical lines, which intersect the curves of the ceiling with daring abruptness, is intended to convey the directness and penetration of radio itself. And the slabs of

<sup>3</sup> Portions of this section are taken directly, or in edited form, from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's *General Electric Designation Report* (LP-1412), prepared by Charles C. Savage, July 9, 1985.

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light which issue from concealed sources in the side wall sconces, to be reflected downward at a thousand angles from the ceiling's bright surface, hint at the broadcast stations which curl their signals into every corner of the land.<sup>4</sup>

Though immediately eye-catching, the ornament does not stand alone in signaling the building's architectural significance. Its carefully considered composition and finely detailed workmanship also set it apart from many buildings of the period. Though the massing of the base and tower are a direct response to the city's Zoning Resolution of 1916 and to the owner's eternal desire to maximize floor space within the allowable building envelope, one senses an artistry at work that sets General Electric apart from more prosaic works of the period. The designers' goal of emphasizing the building's height while also drawing the viewer's eye across and up the facades to gain an appreciation of the overall composition and its ornament can be clearly seen. The treatment of the northeast corner and the massing of the setbacks to visually "buttress" the tower are not random or proscribed responses to the zoning law. Instead, they represent Cross & Cross's well-wrought aesthetic decisions designed to provide its prominent client with a landmark building.

Finally, the General Electric Building is significant because of the manner in which its design displays an unusual sensitivity to the building's relationship with its neighbors, particularly St. Bartholomew's Church which was already a well-regarded landmark on Park Avenue by the time the design of General Electric began. When RCA acquired the building site in 1929, the block was already dominated by period-revival buildings, with the Byzantine-Romanesque of St. Bartholomew's dominating the western portion and the academic Gothic of the Cathedral (St. Patrick's) High School (now demolished) to the south. When it was completed, the General Electric building was considered by writers to be a gothic-style building. The term Art Deco had not come into use at this time, leaving observers to grasp for new terms to describe buildings that were offering new forms and motifs to the public. Because of General Electric's flamboyant crown, which many believed recalled the final period of Gothic architecture, and its use of "buttresses", the building's "gothic" qualities were seen as being at home on the block.

Today, the color of the General Electric building – particularly of its bricks – is seen as its primary contextual contribution to the block. Cross & Cross knew from the beginning of the design phase that their building would rise far above, and potentially dominate, the church. Seeing the west façade as a backdrop for St. Bartholomew's, the designers actively chose a brick palette that closely matched the brick coloration used for the church. Doing so lessened the potential for confrontation that a radically different color palette might have produced. J. Clydesdale Cushman, whose firm managed the new building, praised the sensitivity of the architects in the face of the all too prevalent disregard for adjoining properties: "In the instance of the R.C.A. Building, however, an advance step has been taken in that consideration was given by its architects to the previously established styles and color schemes of the existing abutting buildings with the happy result that a new note of harmonious treatment of the ensemble has been struck which I am convinced is a great step in the right direction towards the setting of a new

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Stern, p. 599.



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style in New York."<sup>5</sup> It would be another fifty years before such "preservation-minded" thinking would find its way into the New York streetscape. Today, when viewed from the west, General Electric's tower can almost be seen as a vastly over-scaled campanile belonging to the little church.

History of the Property and its Owner

In 1867 Frederick and Maximilian Schaefer began to assemble lots at the western end of the block where, to the east, the General Electric Building would later be built. In 1878 they constructed the F. & M. Schaefer Brewery complex. Lots 10 and 11 on the southeast corner of the block, just south of the future General Electric site, were deeded to Saint Patrick's Cathedral in 1880. It was only in this century, however, that the block became a desirable location -- a transition enabled by two major factors. In 1903 the Grant of Rights in Streets from the City of New York to the New York and Harlem River Railroad and the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Companies was recorded, providing a right-of-way that literally created Park Avenue as a grand boulevard and initiated a great development surge in this area. In 1914, the entire Schaefer tract was sold to Saint Bartholomew's Church, which planned to move its congregation uptown to a new church building on the now-desirable Park Avenue. The church designed by Bertram Goodhue was built at the northwest corner of the block in 1919; his chapter house and the church's garden were completed at the southwest corner in 1927. In 1924, St. Patrick's built its gothic-style Cathedral High School at the south east corner of the block. Only the northeast portion of the block remained to be developed.

By the late 1920s, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) was in the forefront of the radio and communications industry and it was in need of a headquarters building. The corporation had only come into existence at the end of the previous decade as a result of the swift acceptance of radio technology that began at the turn of the century. When introduced, the "wireless" was used almost exclusively for marine telegraphy and, in 1901, it was adopted by the U.S. Navy as a substitute for homing pigeons. In 1912, the sinking of the *Titanic*, whose distress signals had been picked up by David Sarnoff working in the New York office of the British-owned American Marconi Company, helped prove the reliability of the wireless and encouraged exploration into broadcast sound by British and American interests. When, in 1919, General Electric (GE) was about to sell the Alexanderson alternator to American Marconi, the U.S. Navy intervened, urging that this all-important component remain accessible in America. A group of companies with radio and electrical interests were mobilized to form RCA, as a subsidiary of GE, which was the most powerful company in the consortium. RCA then acquired American Marconi, giving it a virtual monopoly on the advertising, marketing, distribution, and selling of communication devices and services. It was not, however, allowed to have any manufacturing facilities in order that it not compete with those of the members of the consortium.

By 1929, RCA had experienced tremendous growth, with subsidiaries that included the National Broadcasting Company and Radio-Keith-Orpheum (a leading producer, distributor, and exhibitor of motion pictures). In that year, it also acquired the Victor Talking Machine Corporation, officially

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in LPC's *General Electric Building Designation Report*, p. 15.

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becoming RCA-Victor. The company began to plan for a new headquarters, and chose the firm of Cross & Cross to design a tower at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 51st Street. Cross & Cross had a strong track record with office buildings, and had just begun work on the sixty-story City Bank Farmers' Trust Building downtown. RCA put together a corporate entity called the Bartholomew Building Corporation (in deference to its already much-admired future neighbor to the west) to acquire the property and construct the building. By the end of 1929, Bartholomew had acquired a large parcel from Norko Realty Company and Julian Tishman & Sons, Inc., and two 51st Street lots from the Nichols Holding Co. A building permit was issued by the city on December 17, 1929 and construction for the 560-foot high building began on May 3, 1930 -- only a month before, the existing brownstones had been demolished.

Meanwhile, David Sarnoff, by then executive vice president of RCA, wanted release from the constraints on manufacturing that were placed on the company by the consortium and sought corporate independence. In late 1929, Owen Young, chairman of GE, began negotiating a move for RCA to Rockefeller Center, which was then being planned. Sarnoff took up the presidency of RCA in January 1930, offering the consortium's member companies large blocks of RCA stock to release their exclusive manufacturing rights and royalties on RCA licenses. Along with the stock settlement it made to GE, RCA also agreed to give it the tall office building which at that very moment was proceeding from the planning stages and beginning to rise at 51st Street and Lexington Avenue. Thus, before construction was even completed, the RCA Building became the General Electric Building.

Historic Context

The General Electric Building was built at an interesting time in American architecture during which classically-trained -- often Ecole des Beaux Arts-trained -- architects began to work in new stylistic idioms that freed them from many of the rigid rules and assumptions that had been part of their training. The Art Deco style, which gradually came to America from Europe beginning in the mid-1920s, provided architects with a "non-historical" style that allowed for the exploration of new creative avenues, seemingly without reference to the past. Art Deco was not progressive in the manner of the European Modernism that was reaching America around the same period. It did not change the form or structure of buildings. Rather, it provided a new stylistic vocabulary that could be applied to buildings that varied little, if at all, from earlier structures garbed in classicized styles. In addition, the 1920s saw a development boom in mid-town Manhattan that produced a group of Art Deco skyscrapers distinguished by the quality of their design (such as the Chrysler Building, 1929, NHL 12/08/76; the Chanin Building, 1929, NR-listed 4/23/80, and General Electric) as well as their record-setting size (Chrysler and the Empire State Building, 1931, NHL 6-24-86).

It was this heady mix of a new architectural vocabulary and rampant development that led to the design of the General Electric Building. The firm of Cross & Cross, however, was rooted in the classical underpinnings of the Beaux Arts period. The principals of firm were John Walter Cross (1878-1951) and Eliot Cross (1884-1949), brothers from New Jersey who both attended Groton School in Groton, Massachusetts. John matriculated at Yale, graduating with the Class of 1900. Eliot did not follow in his older brother's footsteps to New Haven but chose Harvard from which he graduated in 1906. Meanwhile,



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John spent two years in architectural study at Columbia, and then went to Paris to attend the Ecole des Beaux Arts, from which he received the diploma in 1907. The two brothers formed their partnership upon John's return the same year. Sometimes in the case of partners, ascertaining which one was responsible for particular facets of the firm's work is difficult. No such difficulty appears to cloud authorship at Cross & Cross. John Cross designed the buildings while his brother secured the commissions and became involved with real estate development.

The firm designed numerous types of buildings, including private residences, clubs, residential neighborhood bank branches, schools, hotel and apartment buildings, and tall office buildings. Their smaller, generally earlier, works can be characterized by a preference for the 18th-century English style, generalized though correct, imaginative though never inappropriate, combinations of Georgian or Adams motifs -- styles appropriate to the scale of a smaller building. The slightly larger hotels and apartment buildings share a distinct treatment in which the traditional academic pattern of base-shaft-capital is observed. The spare use of the classical motifs, as seen in the residential category, inform only the base and upper stories of these more massive buildings. More attention is paid to the ornamentation of the ground floor and the stories immediately above it, as well as to the cornice and parapet, rather than to the great breadth of wall surface between them. The early tall buildings share this emphasis on traditional design precepts. Only one architectural convention remains common to all types of Cross & Cross buildings -- the high quality of their ornamental program, regardless of style. Often a personification (or personifications) is applied or emerges as ornament, a kind of Cross & Cross signature. This often took the form of faces carved into keystones, or symbolic representations of the type of work performed within the building, such as the sheaves of grain, scales, fasces, freestanding eagles and helmeted herms, symbolizing abundance and protection, that were used for a tall bank building.

By the late 1920s, the firm, like many others, began to incorporate the new Art Deco style into their work. This was undoubtedly driven as much, if not more, by their clients desire to be seen as "new" or "modern" as it was by the architects' excitement to play with a new stylistic vocabulary. Many firms produced half-hearted "Art Deco" variations of the buildings they had been designing for years. At the General Electric Building, along with the contemporary City Bank Farmers' Trust Building downtown (20 Exchange Place), Cross & Cross took the new forms and made them their own. Their years of practice working unique ornament into their designs were brought to the fore at these buildings, which remain their most notable works.

Conclusion

Today we can appreciate the highly popular and often published profile of the General Electric Tower and its significance as one of the monuments of the Art Deco style. Seen now as another variation within the style, the General Electric tower contributes to the historical aspect and the dynamism of the New York City skyline. The allegorical deities, an architectural conceit of the great Baroque architects, just below the tower's pinnacled crown of gold glazed tracery, have no equal. They are the apogee of the Cross & Cross firm's delight in signature symbolism. In their choice of massing, articulation, ornament, and color Cross & Cross created a laudable and exemplary design.

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 586346 4512094  
Zone Easting Northing

3 18    
Zone Easting Northing

2 18

4 18

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By (\*\*See Continuation Sheet\*\*)

name/title Contact: Kathy Howe, Historic Preservation Specialist  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
organization Field Services Bureau date August 25, 2003  
street & number P.O. Box 189, Peebles Island telephone 518-237-8643, ext. 3266  
city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188-0189

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name The Feil Organization, Attn: Jay Anderson  
street & number 370 Seventh Avenue telephone 212-563-6557  
city or town New York state NY zip code 10001

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503



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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of this nomination is outlined on the accompanying Sanborn Map.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the entire footprint of the nominated structure.

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**FORM PREPARED BY:**

Jay Platt  
Building Conservation Associates, Inc.  
158 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10001  
212-777-1300

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

Maps

Sanborn Map.  
USGS Topo Map.

Photographs

General Electric Building  
570 Lexington Avenue  
New York County, NY  
Photographer: Jay Platt  
Date: August 7, 2003  
Location of negatives: Building Conservation Associates, 158 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10001

| <u>Photo #</u> | <u>Description (compass directions based on "map north")</u>                                |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1              | West façade (view toward the east)                                                          |
| 2              | View of west façade of the tower (view toward the east)                                     |
| 3              | View of east façade (Lexington Avenue) of the base (view toward the southwest)              |
| 4              | View of north façade (East 51 <sup>st</sup> Street) of the base (view toward the southwest) |
| 5              | View depicting junction of the base and tower (view toward the southwest)                   |
| 6              | View of main entrance at east facade (view toward the west)                                 |
| 7              | View of clock and lamp on corner pier just above ground level (view toward the southwest)   |
| 8              | View of white metal ornament above entrance to corner commercial space (view to the south)  |



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 11 Page 2

General Electric Building  
**Name of Property**  
New York County, New York  
**County and State**

- 
- |    |                                                                                            |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9  | View of terra cotta tracery at the crown (concave faces contain gold glaze) (typical view) |
| 10 | View of inner face of terra cotta tracery at the crown (typical view)                      |
| 11 | View of lobby from in front of the security desk (view to the west)                        |
| 12 | View up to lobby ceiling (view to northwest)                                               |
| 13 | View up to murals in triangular cutouts in the lobby ceiling vault (typical view)          |
| 14 | View of lobby elevator doors, surrounds, and white metal mailbox (view to southwest)       |
| 15 | View of basement elevator lobby, with former subway entrance infill at rear (view to east) |

EAST FORTY - NINTH

EAST FIFTY - FIRST

F.A.S.T. FIFTEEN

EAST FORTY - NINTH

AVENUE

570 Lexington Ave.

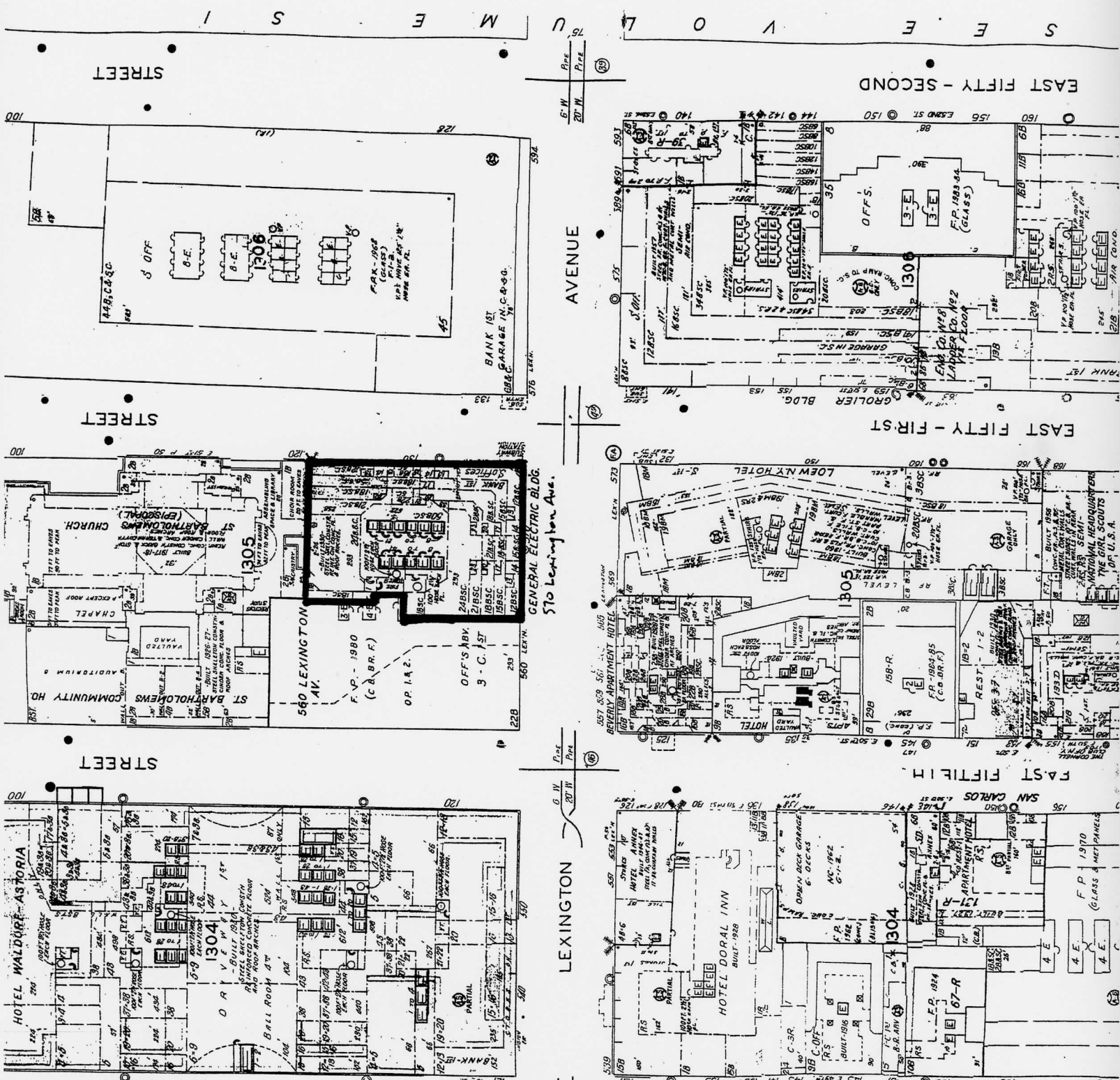
LEXINGTON

492

## General Electric Building

570 Lexington Avenue  
New York County, NY

Boundary indicated by dark line  
Sanborn Map, 2002  
Scale 1" = 100'





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY General Electric Building  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, New York

DATE RECEIVED: 12/19/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/06/04  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/21/04 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/01/04  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03001515

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 1/28/04 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



1 General Electric Building New York, NY



General Electric Building  
New York Co, N.Y.

1



2 General Electric Building New York, NY

General Electric  
Building  
New York Co., N.Y.  
2.





3 General Electric Building New York, NY

General Electric Building  
New York Co, NY

3.



4 General Electric Building New York. NY



General Electric Building  
New York County, NY  
4.



5 General Electric Building, New York, NY

General Electric Building  
New York County, NY  
5.





6 General Electric Building New York, NY

General Electric Building  
New York County, NY

6 .



7 General Electric Building New York, NY



General Electric Building  
New York County, N.Y. ✓

7.



8 General Electric Building New York, NY

General Electric Building  
New York County, NY

8.



9 General Electric Building New York, NY



General Electric Building  
New York County, NY  
9.



10 General Electric Building New York, NY

General Electric Building  
New York County, NY

10.



11 General Electric Building New York, NY

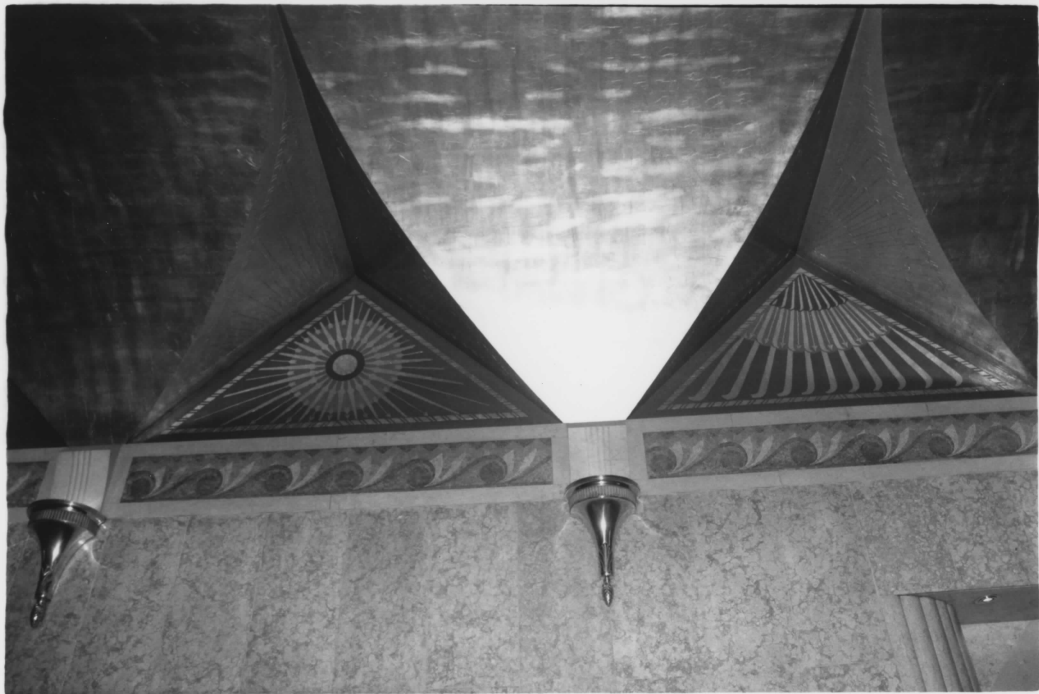


General Electric Building  
New York County, NY  
11.



12 General Electric Building New York, NY

General Electric Building  
New York County, NY  
12.



13 General Electric Building New York, NY



General Electric Building  
New York County, NY

13.



14 General Electric Building New York. NY

General Electric Building  
New York County, N.Y.

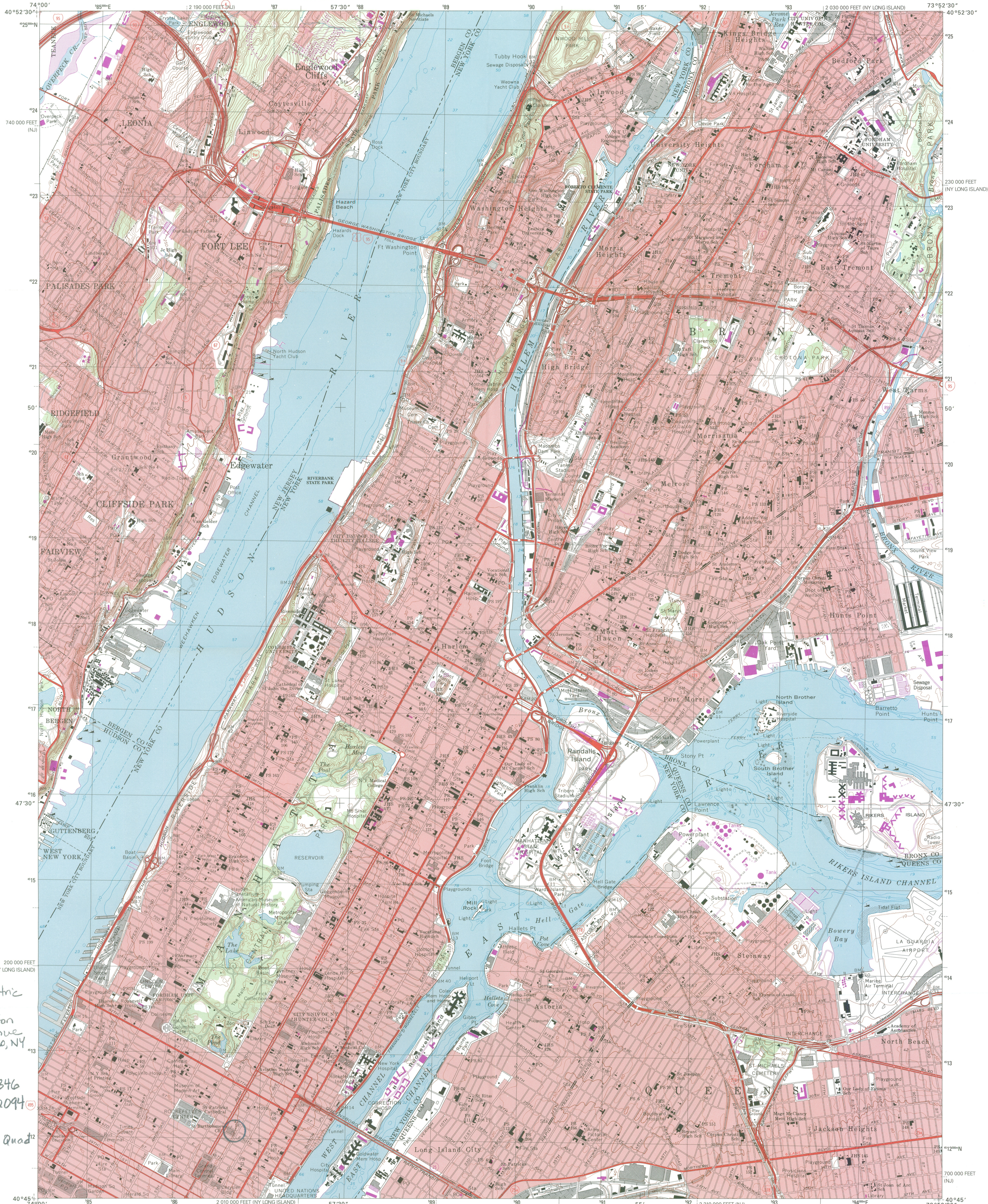
14.



15 General Electric Building New York, NY

General Electric Building  
New York County, NY  
15.





General Electric  
Building  
570 Lexington  
Avenue  
New York Co, NY

Zone 18  
Easting 586346  
Northing 4512094

USGS Topo  
Central Park Quad  
1:24000

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Topography compiled 1966. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1977 and other sources. Photomaps using imagery dated 1995; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1966. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1999.  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 226, 274, 745, 746, and 747 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes.  
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27)  
Projection: New York coordinate system, Long Island zone (transverse Mercator)  
10 000-foot ticks: New York coordinate system, Long Island zone and New Jersey coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software.  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map.  
Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content standards and may conflict with previously mapped contours.

UTM GRID AND 1999 MAGNETIC NORTH  
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

13.3°  
240 MILS

0° 42'  
12 MILS

20%  
TOTAL COVERED FIBER

SCALE 1:24 000

1 000 0 0.5 1 2  
KILOMETERS

1000 0 0.5 1 2  
MILES

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 8000 9000 10000  
FEET

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET, DATUM IS MEAN LOWER LOW WATER  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE  
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY  
4 FEET IN THE HUDSON RIVER AND 5.7 FEET IN THE EAST RIVER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

NEW YORK

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway  
hard surface .....

Secondary highway  
hard surface .....

Light-duty road, hard or  
improved surface .....

Unimproved road .....

Interstate Route

U.S. Route

State Route

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 |   |

1 Hackensack  
2 Yonkers  
3 Mount Vernon  
4 Weehawen  
5 Flushing  
6 Jersey City  
7 Brooklyn  
8 Jamaica

CENTRAL PARK, NY-NJ  
1995  
NIMA 6265 IV SW-SERIES V821

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLE NAMES

ISBN 0-407-92025-4  
9 780607 920253





THE FEIL ORGANIZATION

Seven Penn Plaza  
New York, NY 10001  
212.563.6557  
212.563.6657 Fax



September 3, 2003

Ms. Kathy Howe  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation  
Field Services Bureau  
P.O. Box 189  
Peebles Island  
Waterford, NY 12188

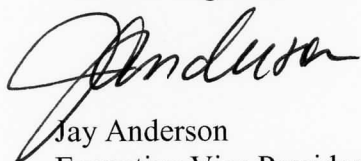
**Re: The GE Building/570 Lexington Avenue, NYC**

Dear Ms. Howe,

As representative of the owners of the above referenced property, I am writing to you to convey their unqualified support that the building be included in the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further comment on this matter.

Sincerely,  
The Feil Organization

  
Jay Anderson  
Executive Vice President



## The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

1 Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor North, New York NY 10007 TEL: 212-669-7922 FAX: 212-669-7797

<http://nyc.gov/landmarks/>



RONDA WIST  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
[rwist@lpc.nyc.gov](mailto:rwist@lpc.nyc.gov)

October 17, 2003

Ms. Ruth Pierpont, Director  
New York State Office of Parks Recreation  
and Historic Preservation  
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau  
Peebles Island  
P.O. Box 189  
Waterford, New York 12188-0189

Re: General Electric Building, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York,  
New York

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

I write on behalf of Chair Robert B. Tierney in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the General Electric Building at 570 Lexington Avenue in Manhattan for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Commission supports the nomination of the General Electric Building. On July 9, 1985, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate the General Electric Building an individual New York City landmark. The General Electric Building was constructed in 1929-31 to create a highly visible image for the RCA Corporation and is a significant example of Art Deco architecture.

Therefore, based on the Commission's review of the property and the materials submitted by the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, the Commission has determined that General Electric Building appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Sincerely yours,

Ronda Wist

cc: Robert B. Tierney, Chair  
Mary Beth Betts