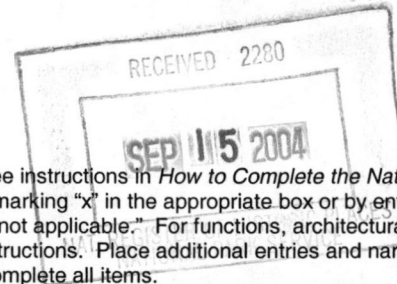


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Biltmore Theater

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 261-265 West 47th Street [] not for publication

city or town New York [] vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10036-1412

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide ☒ locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mildred Carter, SAPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

7/20/04
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) _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

10/27/04
date of action

Biltmore Theater

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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

1

0

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)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

Italian Renaissance

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick; marble

roof tar

other

Narrative Description

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

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7. Narrative Description

Portions of the following narrative description and statement of significance are excerpted from the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, designation report. (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. *Biltmore Theater Designation Report*. November 10, 1987. LP-1320.)

The Biltmore Theater, at 261-65 West 47th Street in New York City, was constructed in 1925-26 by the Chanin Organization, to the designs of the prolific Broadway theater architect Herbert J. Krapp. The theater was substantially restored and rehabilitated and reopened in 2003 as the new home for the Manhattan Theater Club. Its 47th Street facade is classically detailed with neo-Italian Renaissance ornamentation in low relief. Clad in glazed brick with terra-cotta ornament and a painted, rusticated terra-cotta base, the façade is articulated by two terra-cotta Composite pilasters at each side of a central multiple-door entrance with a non-original overhanging pressed-metal marquee. The pilasters rise to an elaborate terra-cotta entablature consisting of a frieze containing wave moldings and rosettes, and a cornice with dentils and decorative modillions. Above the cornice an attic level is suggested by a brick parapet, which is accented at either end by decorative balustrades. The façade is organized into an A-B-A tripartite composition by the grouping of the four pilasters, between which are rectangular brick panels articulated with decorative terra-cotta tiles at each corner. Smaller decorative brick panels form a horizontal band beneath the cornice between the Composite capitals of the pilasters. Each of the panels at the either end of the façade, between the flanking pilasters, is decorated with a cartouche within a wreath molding. Just above the rusticated marble base of the building are six windows – four in the center and one at each end between the pilasters. The windows are metal-clad wood, six-over-six double-hung windows. In the center of the façade an illuminated “Biltmore” sign projects from the façade, angled towards the east, where theatergoers make their way from Broadway.

The Biltmore Theater auditorium is a horseshoe shaped space, set slightly askew in relationship to its site, with a single center aisle. The rear and side walls of the orchestra are curved, and the floor is raked. There is a promenade at the rear of the orchestra, with staircases at either side leading up to the balcony level. There is an orchestra pit in front of the stage, and the stage extends behind the proscenium arch to form a stage picture, visible from the audience, framed by the proscenium arch. The plaster ceiling incorporates decorative plaster ornamentation and a large oval dome.

The simple elegance of the space is accented by decorative ornamentation, which consists of plasterwork in relief, integrated into the surfaces that define the configuration of the auditorium. The proscenium arch is outlined by a rope molding and is surmounted by a cartouche. The spandrels of the arch are filled with delicate Adamesque ornamentation. The curved rear and side walls of the orchestra level are covered in paneled wood wainscoting. The rear wall of the orchestra is punctuated by, from the center, theater doors leading to the lobby, symmetrically placed openings to finished staircases leading to the mezzanine and balcony levels and fire doors leading to the exterior alleys. At each side of the proscenium is a pseudo box, carried on consoles and framed by fluted pilasters and columns supporting a grand arch. Below each box at orchestra level a door punctuates the walls - where non-original wall panels conceal original cast stone – one leading to the dressing room tower. The rectangular opening rising from each box is surmounted by a pediment with Adamesque detail, carried on

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console brackets. Panels adorned with musical instruments, supporting lunettes adorned with cameo motifs, frame the rectangular openings. The pilasters and columns flanking each box have modified Ionic capitals. Relief panels adorn the arch spandrels.

The balcony level consists of a raked floor slab with a large seating arranged at the center of the balcony and two smaller seating areas at either side. Vomitories at the rear of the balcony provide access to a vaulted corridor beneath the balcony seats. A decorative metal railing surrounds the entrance to each vomitory. The vaulted corridor is highly decorated, featuring plaster walls with plaster and wood moldings, wood baseboards and chair rails, and plaster vaults above. The stairs leading from the orchestra to the balcony have landings at this level at either end of the corridor.

The public stairs leading from the rear of the orchestral level to the balcony are character-defining features of the interior, as the main circulation cores for the auditorium and because of their high level of decoration. The elegant stair railings have plain and decorative iron balusters, decorative newel posts, and graceful wood railings. Wall-mounted wood railings of similar design are mounted on decorative iron brackets. The plaster walls of the stairwell feature decorative moldings outlining rectangular panels.

A series of utilitarian rooms is located at the rear of the balcony level, beyond the vaulted hallway beneath the balcony seating. These secondary spaces served as the lounges and lavatories. These spaces were reconfigured during the rehabilitation of the theater, completed in 2003.

A mezzanine level is located one flight above the balcony. The mezzanine, which was substantially altered during the 2003 rehabilitation, contains patrons lounges and additional lavatories. There are not historic finishes within these spaces.

At balcony level the side walls are subdivided into sections by paired engaged pilasters. Above the wall sections is a wide frieze with shield-adorned panels. The balcony fascia is decorated with panels and medallions containing gold-leafed silhouettes. The plaster moldings and applied decorations here are deteriorated and missing in some areas.

In the full-height space, the ceiling features a large oval dome outlined by decorative plaster moldings, surrounding a centerpiece of Adamesque panels. The dome is a significant architectural feature and character-defining element of the interior design. The underside of the balcony is quite ornate, with Adamesque style plasterwork panels in low relief.

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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

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

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Performing Arts

Period of Significance:

1925-1952

Significant Dates:

1925-26

Significant Person:

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder:

Chanin Organization (builder)

Krapp, Herbert J. (architect)

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal Agency

☒ Local Government

☐ University

☐ Other repository: _____

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8. Significance Statement

The Biltmore Theater, constructed in 1925-26 by the Chanin Organization to the designs of Herbert J. Krapp, is located on West 47th Street in New York's famed Broadway theater district in and around Times Square. It was designated an individual interior landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1987. In 2003, the renovated Biltmore Theater reopened as the new home to the Manhattan Theater Club. The Chanin Organization was a major theater construction entity in the Broadway theater district during the 1920s, and Krapp, a highly prolific and significant architect of the Broadway theater district, designed all of the Chanin theaters. He designed almost half of the total number of Broadway theaters, in fact, 14 of which are still in active use. Encompassing the largest concentration of legitimate playhouses in the world, the Broadway theater district has a long and rich history, playing, since the late 19th century, a significant role in New York's cultural scene and in the American theatrical tradition. The elegant Biltmore Theater, constructed by a major Broadway theater builder, designed by a prolific theater architect and host to many well known Broadway plays throughout its history; is an architecturally and historically significant part of the rich history and dramatic architecture of New York City's Broadway theater district.

Development of the Broadway Theater District

The development of the Times Square area as a theater district around the turn of the 20th century was the result of a combination of the northward movement of residential and commercial development, aided by the growth of mass transportation, and the expansion of the city's role in American theater.

The northward movement of New York's residential, commercial and entertainment districts occurred at a steady rate throughout the 19th century. In the early 1800s businesses, stores, hotels, places of worship and theaters clustered downtown in lower Manhattan. As the population grew and conditions became crowded, and as mass transit facilitated movement within the city, these businesses and cultural institutions districts began to move north along with the residential population. The creation of certain identifiable neighborhoods was the result of specific industries clustering together as they migrated north. Residential development was often ahead of the commercial development in this northern movement, as residential neighborhoods pushed north to avoid the growing commercial and industrial development in their midst, while commercial development followed the residential movement to remain in the vicinity of its elite customer base. Theaters, which had been built amidst stores and other commercial structures along Broadway in lower Manhattan during the 19th century, move northward in stages along with commercial development, with successive retail and entertainment districts developing in Union Square, then Madison Square, then Herald Square, and finally the area known as Long Acre Square, now known as Times Square.

Over the span of a century, Long Acre Square developed from an early 19th century district of farmlands and rural summer homes, into an early 20th century hub of transportation, media and entertainment. New developments of public transportation, including horsecars, the opening of the Grand Central Depot, the advent of elevated railways and the subway system, shaped and catalyzed the growth of the area. The 1883 Construction of the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway between 39th and 40th Streets, the 1888

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construction of the Broadway Theater on the southwest corner of Broadway and 41st Street, and the 1893 erection of the American Theater on Eighth Avenue between 41st and 42nd Streets precipitated the move into the Long Acre Square area. It was when Oscar Hammerstein I erected his Lyric Theater on Broadway between 44th and 45th in 1895 that the wave of theater building there officially began. With the construction of the New York Times headquarters building there in 1904, the area was renamed Times Square. By this time many playhouses had located in the area, taking advantage of its accessibility. In early decades of the 20th century more playhouses were built, many by Hammerstein, along Broadway and its tributaries in the area of Times Square, creating the nation's largest and most famous theater district.

At the end of the 19th century, New York had become the starting point for a vast, nationwide entertainment network known as "the road." This complex organization began in the 1860s when the traditional manner of presenting theater shows – one company in each playhouse presenting a series of shows throughout the season – was superseded by the growing popularity of "combination" shows, in which a company of actors appeared in a single show that toured around the country.

By 1904, there were some 420 combination companies touring through thousands of theaters throughout the country. Of critical importance to this theater production system, was a central location where combination shows could be cast, rehearsed, tried out, and then booked as part of the cross country tour. New York, already regarded as the most important theater city in America, became the natural headquarters for the combination system, and its theater district the home of playhouses, rehearsal halls, scenery, costume, lighting and makeup company headquarters, offices of theater agents and producers, and other auxiliary enterprises. By the turn of the century, the section of Broadway between 37th Street and 42nd Street was known as the Rialto, a bustling center of theater entertainment. A few decades later the entire theater district had clustered around Times Square, roughly between 42nd Street and 47th Streets.

In the years 1901 – 1920 forty-three theaters were built in midtown in or near Times Square, much of which were inspired by the competition for control of the "the road." The Shubert Brothers and the Theatrical Syndicate each controlled a number of theaters, and competition between the two for dominance of the industry resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of playhouses, both in New York and across the country. After World War 1 "the road" began to decline and New York theatrical activity increased. The economic prosperity of the 1920s made possible the construction of thirty additional playhouses in the Times Square area, expanding the boundaries from 39th Street north to Columbus Circle, from Eighth Avenue to Sixth Avenue.

The stock market crash of 1929 and the Depression in the 1930s caused a decline of theater activity and the construction of new playhouses. Some existing playhouses were torn down and many were converted to motion picture houses and later to radio and television studios. Fortunately, the theaters that survive from the formation and hey day of the Times Square theater district represent a cross-section of types and styles, and among them possess great historical and cultural significance in New York and in America.

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A prominent part of American theatrical history, these extant Broadway theaters played host to each major trend in American theater during the last 80 years. Major international stars such as Sarah Bernhardt, Eleanora Duse and Mrs. Patrick Campbell graced their stages. The beginnings of a distinctly American drama could first be seen in these playhouses, with the productions of Western melodramas of David Belasco, the social comedies of Clyde Fitch and Landgon Mitchell, and the problem plays of Edward Sheldon and Eugene Walter. Influenced by the 1920s rise of "little theaters" in which experimental "art" theaters gained critical popularity, Broadway playhouses were infused with new life, presenting the work of a new generation of playwrights including Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Philip Barry, S.N. Behrman, Rachel Crothers, Syndey Howard, George S. Kaufmann, George Kelly and Elmer Rice. New concern with political and social issues dominated American culture during the Depression, and was dramatized on the stages of Broadway theaters. They continued to show challenging plays through the 1940s and 50s, when the likes of Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge first began writing for the theater. The simultaneous growth of popularity of musicals was also manifested on the Broadway stage, where the works of Roger & Hammerstein, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern were presented and then exported to theaters around the country and the world. The following decades of ferment and change were important in American theater and likewise began in New York, where impetus for innovation and experimentation Off- and Off-Off Broadway revitalized Broadway theater. Since then Broadway has remained dominant in American Theater – with many of its theaters remaining in active use.

The Biltmore Theater, as one of the Broadway theaters with intact interiors surviving today, and a long history of association with Broadway theater activity, contributes to the district's rich history by virtue of its participation in that history.

Builder

The Chanin Organization, a major New York City construction company founded by Irwin S. Chanin, constructed the Biltmore Theater in 1925-26. The Chanin Construction Organization formed in the 1920s, when Irwin and his brother, Henry I. Chanin, joined forces and began constructing one and two- family houses, apartment buildings, and an office building in Brooklyn, and the Fur Center Building in Manhattan's Garment District. Irwin Chanin was always interested in theater, but remembered feeling humiliated as a child, when he had to enter through a separate door to reach the cheap seats in the balcony. In 1924 he secured the services of the theater architect Herbert J. Krapp, and the Chanin Organization soon joined the Shubert Company as the major entrepreneurial builders of Broadway theaters.

Mindful of his past humiliation at the theater, Chanin resolved to develop a more democratic theater plan. He envisioned an orchestra level that rose steeply towards the rear of the theater, allowing space below for a large single- entrance lobby, which that would welcome all theater-goers. He proposed a reconfiguration of the seating, replacing the traditional series of balconies by a single, large balcony, and he insisted on wider seats, more space between rows, and more comfortable dressing rooms.

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Chanin's first theater was called Chanin's Forty-Sixth Street Theater, which was followed by the Biltmore and the Mansfield Theaters, in 1925. In 1926 the company undertook a major mixed-use, multiple building project to complete what was to become the theater district's traditional and energetic heart. This was the block bounded by 45th and 46th Streets, Seventh and Eighth Avenues, known as Shubert Alley. Chanin's theaters and hotels, along with existing Shubert theaters, completed a cohesive, bustling, vibrant theater district center. The Chanins built six Broadway playhouses in all, and three movie palaces, including the famed Roxy Theater, now demolished. In 1927-29 Chanin built its 56-story headquarters, a designated New York City landmark, and included a small theater on its 50th floor. His last involvement with theaters came only 4 years after it began, when he acquired from the Shuberts the Century (formerly New) Theater at Central Park West and 62nd Street, and replaced it with the tall Art Deco style Century Apartments. Chanin also built the Majestic, another striking Art Deco apartment building on Central Park West. The 1930s and 40s brought extensive suburban building activity. During World War II the company was very busy building 2000 pre-fabricated dwellings in Newport News, Virginia, five hangars at National Airport in Washington, DC, the naval Ordnance Laboratory in White Oak, Maryland, and five Navy powder magazine buildings in Indian Head, Maryland. The Chanin Organization also built numerous manufacturing and industrial buildings in New York City area.

Though the Chanin Organization spent relatively little time, of its entire history in the construction business, on Broadway theaters, its significance in the development of the Broadway theater district was disproportionately great. In his Broadway theaters, Chanin championed a democratic approach to theater design, created theaters still considered among the best for theatrical performances, and helped complete the development of Shubert Alley, at the heart of the Broadway theater district. Given the nature of theater productions at the time, when theater companies toured across the country putting on shows in the major cities, usually originating in New York City, and requiring common settings for their productions, the New York City theaters greatly influenced theater design across the country. All of the Chanin theaters survive today, and many, including the Biltmore, are locally designated landmarks.

Architect

The Biltmore Theater's architect, Herbert J. Krapp, designed all of the Chanin theaters, and was a highly prolific and significant architect of the Broadway theater district. The character of the district owes more to him than to any other architect – he designed almost half of the total number of Broadway theaters, 14 of which are still in active use. Before the First World War he worked in the office of Herts & Tallant, premier theater designers of the period, where he took on much of the design responsibility. He went on to design theaters for the two major theater builders of the post-World War I period, the Shubert and the Chanin organizations. The Shubert organization hired Krapp to design a dozen of their theaters, in New York as well as in Boston, Philadelphia, and elsewhere. He designed nine other Times Square houses, six, built between 1924 and 1927, for the Chanin Construction Company.

Krapp's theaters reflect the interest and needs of a new breed of theatrical entrepreneur – the large-scale speculative owner/builder. Prior to the rise of the Shuberts and the Chanins, independent companies or producers owned individual theaters. Changes within the theater industry at the beginning of the 20th century,

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from production groups that stayed in one place and put on a variety of different shows, to traveling production companies that put on the same show in different cities, were manifested in Krapp's theaters. Differences between his architectural design of the Shubert theaters during and just after World War 1, and the Chanin theaters in the 1920s, provide a degree stylistic diversity within the theater district, reflect changing theater design tastes, and correspond with rising prosperity in America in the 1920s. His Shubert theaters were, for the most part, designed in a restrained classical style, typically not adorned with a great deal of applied ornament but often accented with ornamental iron balconies, a rounded corner facing Broadway featuring an entrance with a broken pediment enframement and an oval cartouche. They were clad in brick, often laid in a diaper pattern, usually with deeply inset mortar joints. The interiors often featured Adamesque style ornament including delicate garlands, rosettes and foliate bands.

For the Chanins, Krapp's theaters became more ornate in design, especially on the exterior. His first two theaters for the Chanins, the Forty-Sixth Street in 1924 and the Biltmore in 1925, are neo-Renaissance style buildings with extensive terra-cotta detail including rusticated bases, monumental Corinthian pilasters flanking the entrance marquis, and balustraded parapets above ornate cornices. His next commission, the Brooks Atkinson in 1926, featured a Mediterranean inspired façade design that was referred to at the time as "modern Spanish" style. The next three theater designs for the Chanins, the Golden, Royale, and Majestic Theaters, all built between 1926 and 1927, all possess similar stylistic characteristics. The interiors of these buildings have details such as twisted columns, arcades, and escutcheons that match the style of the exteriors. All of Krapp's auditorium and lobby interiors were simple yet elegant, comfortable and accommodating.

Following his work for the Chanins, Krapp designed three theaters for independent companies, all distinctive in style and character. The Waldorf, in 1926 (now demolished) was ornate French neo-Classical, The Alvin in 1927 (now the Neil Simon) has a red brick, neo-Federal style brick façade, and the Hammerstein (now the Ed Sullivan) is a neo-Gothic theater within a tall office building. In 1928 the Shuberts commissioned their last theater from Krapp, the Ethel Barrymore, which was among his most fine and unusual designs. It is monumentally scaled, and combines an ornate rusticated Beaux-Arts-style base with a superstructure modeled after the windowed facade of a Roman bath.

Architectural Design

The elegant Biltmore Theater, the second of Krapps' theaters for the Chanins, combines a classically detailed façade and an Adamesque-style interior. The decorative ornamental scheme of the interior is a handsome design in the Adamesque style, which takes its name from England's 18th century architects Robert and James Adam. Inspired by domestic architecture of Italian classical antiquity, the brothers Adam brought to 18th century Britain a domestic architecture which was highly decorative, with delicate ornamentation and notable plan forms, including rooms which were oval, circular, or rectangular with curved ends. The Biltmore's interior was designated a New York City Interior Landmark in 1987, because of its unique layout and its handsome adaptation of the Adamesque style to the needs of a theater. This was the last and most beautiful Adamesque interior designed by Krapp for a Broadway theater. Like Adam's rooms, the auditorium is a rectangle with differently shaped ends, a proscenium at one end and a horseshoe at the other; the walls are lined with shallow

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pilasters, and the boxes are designed as neo-classical aedicules and placed within a large arch carried on columns, at each side of the theater; the ceiling is decorated with low relief, highly ornamental plaster work. The ceilings are in poor condition since the theater has been closed and neglected for many years.

The Biltmore Theater exterior is classically detailed with neo-Italian Renaissance ornamentation in low relief. Clad in roman brick, the façade is articulated by two Corinthian pilasters at each side of a central entrance marquis. The pilasters rise to an elaborate terra-cotta entablature consisting of a frieze containing wave moldings and rosettes, and a dentilated cornice. Above the cornice an attic level is suggested by a brick parapet, which is accented at either end by decorative balustrades. The façade is organized into a tripartite composition by the grouping of the pilasters, between which are rectangular brick panels articulated with decorative terra-cotta tiles at each corner. Smaller decorative brick panels form a horizontal band beneath the cornice between the Corinthian capitals of the pilasters. Each of the panels at the either end of the façade, between the flanking pilasters, is decorated with a cartouche within a wreath molding. Just above the rusticated marble base of the building are six windows – four in the center and one at each end between the pilasters. The windows are metal-clad wood, six-over-six double hung sash windows. In the center of the façade an illuminated Biltmore sign protrudes from the façade, angled towards Broadway to the east.

Plays at the Biltmore Theater

The Biltmore opened on December 7, 1925, with a production of Owen Davis's *Easy Come, Easy Go*. This was followed by *Kongo*, by Chester DeVonde and Kilbourn Gordon, with Walter Huston. Huston then starred with Claudette Colbert in *The Barker*, by Kenyon Nicholson, which ran for 225 performances in 1927. 1928 started badly, when a dramatization of Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* did not meet with enthusiastic reviews, and police raided Mae West's play, *Pleasure Man*, arresting the cast and closing the show. Later in the year, the play *Tin Pan Alley*, by Hugh Stanislaus Stange, starring Claudette Colbert played 77 performances.

In the 1930s a number of short runs included an adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, with Lee J. Cobb and, in 1936, the WPA used the Biltmore for its "Living Newspaper" series. Longer running shows during the thirties included *Brother Rat*, by John Monks, Jr. and Fred F. Finklehoff, with Eddie Albert and Jose Ferrer, and Clifford Goldsmith's *What A Life*, produced and directed by George Abbott, and starring Eddie Bracken and Butterfly McQueen. Milton Berle played 224 shows at the Biltmore in 1939, starring in *See My Lawyer*, while Ayn Rand's play *The Unconquered* lasted only 6 performance.

Productions in the 1940s included 866 performances of Joseph Fields and Jerome Chordov's *My Sister Eileen*, adapted from stories by Ruth McKenney and starring Shirley Booth; F. Hugh Herbert's *Kiss and Tell*; a not very long run of and adaptation of Emile Zola's *Therese* with Dame May Whitty and Eva Le Galliene; and 31 performances of Jean Paul Sartre's *No Exit*. In 1951 a dramatization on Herman Melville's *Billy Bud* ran for 105 performances.

From the 1952 –53 through the 1960-61 seasons, the Biltmore Theater was used as a radio and television playhouse. Reopening in 1961, the theater saw a decade of extraordinary, long running hit shows. *Take Her*,

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She's Mine starring Art Carney and Elizabeth Ashley ran over 400 performances in 1961-62. Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park* played over 1500 performances from 1963 to 1967. *Hair*, the first rock musical to play, which became a cultural emblem of the 1960s, moved to the Biltmore from the Public Theater and ran from 1967-72, with over 1700 performances.

The 1970s brought Jules Feiffer's *Knock Knock*, and Lily Tomlin in her one woman show, *Appearing Nightly*. *Hair* was revived briefly in 1977, followed by a revival of Paul Zindel's *The Effect of Gamma Rays on the Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. In 1980, Arthur Miller's *The American Clock* played only 12 performances and in 1982 Ira Levin's *Death Trap* moved from the Music Box Theater and ran for a total of 1,793 performances.

Rehabilitation and Restoration

Following a fire in 1987 the theater was closed. The historic structure and its significant interior finishes suffered water damage and deterioration through neglect in the intervening years. In November 2000, the Tony Award-winning Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC) entered into an agreement with Biltmore 47 Associates LLC, for the rehabilitation and historic restoration of the theater. The MTC hired Polshek Partnership Architects to develop an architectural design for the rehabilitation of the abandoned theater, asking that the character of the house be intimate and that the design foster a sense of immediacy between the actors and audience. The proposed rehabilitation of the theater included sensitive restoration of the exterior masonry and restoration and preservation of the significant original spaces and finishes, combined with installation of modern production-related equipment including sound equipment, lighting, projection booth, etc. Because the theater was originally designed to fit as many people as possible, thus compromising elements of comfort for profitability, the rehabilitation also included slight reconfigurations of interior spaces to create a more comfortable, accessible auditorium and more commodious lobby and circulation areas. This historically and architecturally significant theater is once again serving as an active Broadway playhouse, maintaining its original design integrity while serving the needs of modern American theater.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

Biltmore Theater
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

9. Selected Bibliography

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. *Biltmore Theater Designation Report*. November 10, 1987. LP-1320.

Stern, Robert A. M. Gregory Gilmartin and Thomas Mellins. *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars*. New York: Rizzoli, 1987.

Biltmore Theater
Name of Property

New York County, New York
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 5490 4512420
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 for authors)

name/title Contact: Kathy Howe, Historic Preservation Specialist
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
organization Field Services Bureau date April 12, 2004
street & number Peebles Island, P.O. Box 189 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 Richard Gordon, Designated Agent
Biltmore Theater, LLC c/o The Jack Parker Corporation
street & number 1700 Broadway, 34th floor telephone 212-333-3353, ext. 206
city or town New York state NY zip code 10019

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

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 10 Page 1

Biltmore Theater
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of this nomination is outlined on the accompanying map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire lot on which the Biltmore Theater was erected.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 11 **Page** 1

Biltmore Theater

Name of Property

New York County, New York

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Ward Dennis

Katherine Lemos

Higgins & Quasebarth

270 Lafayette Street

New York, NY 10012

(212) 274-9468

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 11 Page 2

Biltmore Theater
Name of Property
New York County, New York
County and State

List of Photos

Biltmore Theater

261-265 West 47th Street

New York County, NY

Photographer: Ward Dennis

Date of photos: April 2004

Location of negatives: Higgins & Quasebarth, 270 Lafayette, Suite 810, New York, NY 10012

- Photo #1 Biltmore Theater, exterior. View looking north across West 47th Street of restored front façade and new marquee and sign.
- Photo #2 View from stage looking towards orchestra and balcony.
- Photo #3 View from balcony looking towards stage.
- Photo #4 View from orchestra, stage right, looking east.
- Photo #5 View from balcony, stage left, looking west.
- Photo #6 View from upper balcony, stage left, looking west with view of restored balcony ceiling. The new back wall of the house is seen at left in photo.
- Photo #7 Main ceiling, view looking up from stage towards balcony. The historic plasterwork at the ceiling has been restored and a new lighting system installed in the flat plaster area surrounding the central plaster medallion.
- Photo #8 Detail of restored ceiling plasterwork at central medallion.
- Photo #9 Detail of restored plaster arch, stage right.
- Photo #10 Detail of restored plaster pilaster, stage right.
- Photo #11 Restored plaster vaults at mezzanine, looking east.
- Photo #12 Patron bar at mezzanine level.
- Photo #13 New hallway at balcony level. New back wall of house is at left in photo.
- Photo #14 New patron's lounge at balcony level.

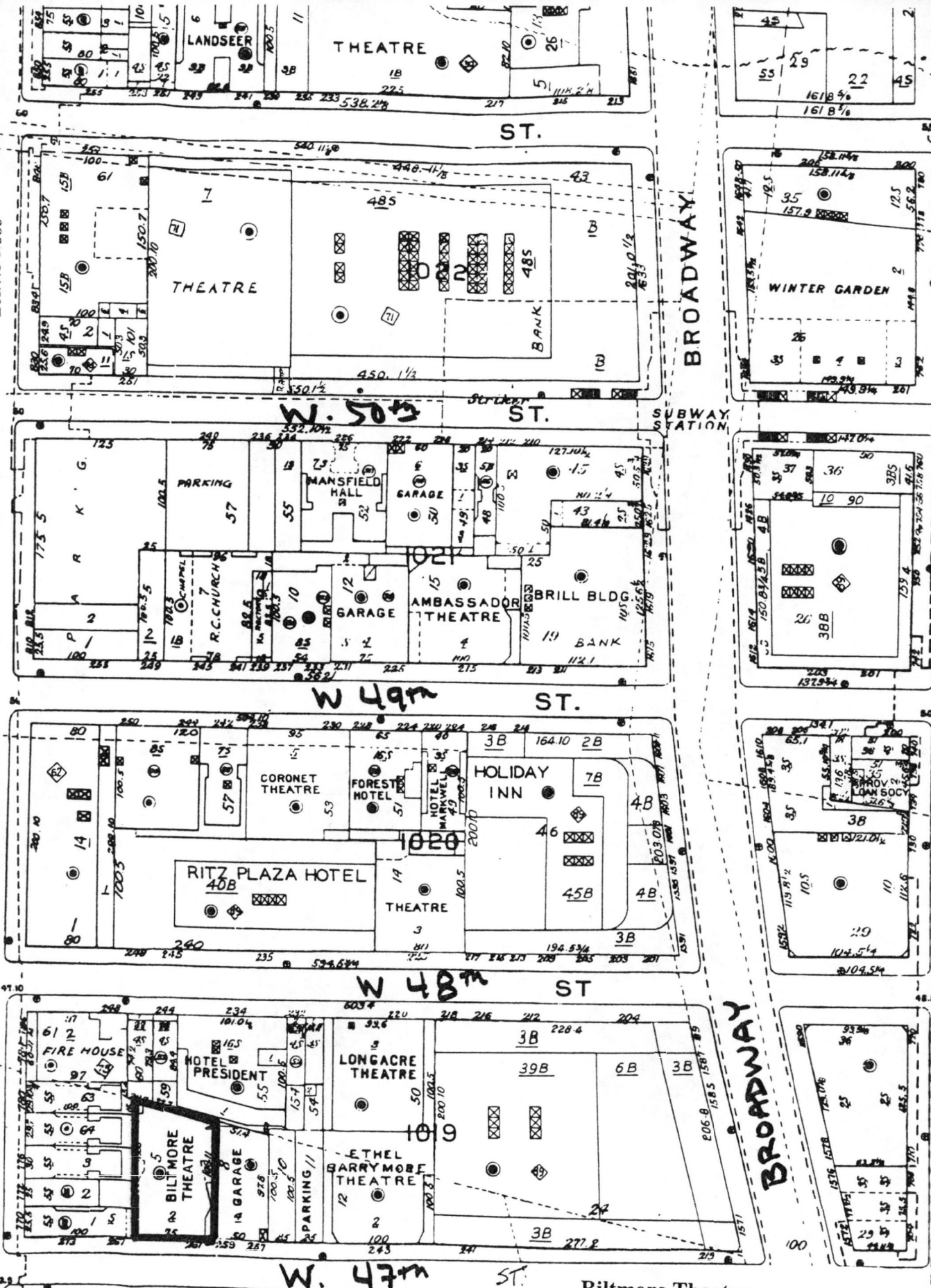
Additional Documentation

- Plans: Orchestra, Mezzanine, Ceiling
- Historic Photos/Renderings

EIGHTH

Geo. Hartman
Maps No. 7 & 167

Mathew Horn, SUBWAY
Lib. 145 P.358



Francis Child Jr. Lib. 67 P.101
69 P.96 Maps 68 & 69
248 P.125

Biltmore Theater
261-265 West 47th Street
New York County, NY

Boundary indicated by dark line.
Sanborn Map, 1990.
Scale: 1" = 120'

SUBWAY STATION SEVENTH

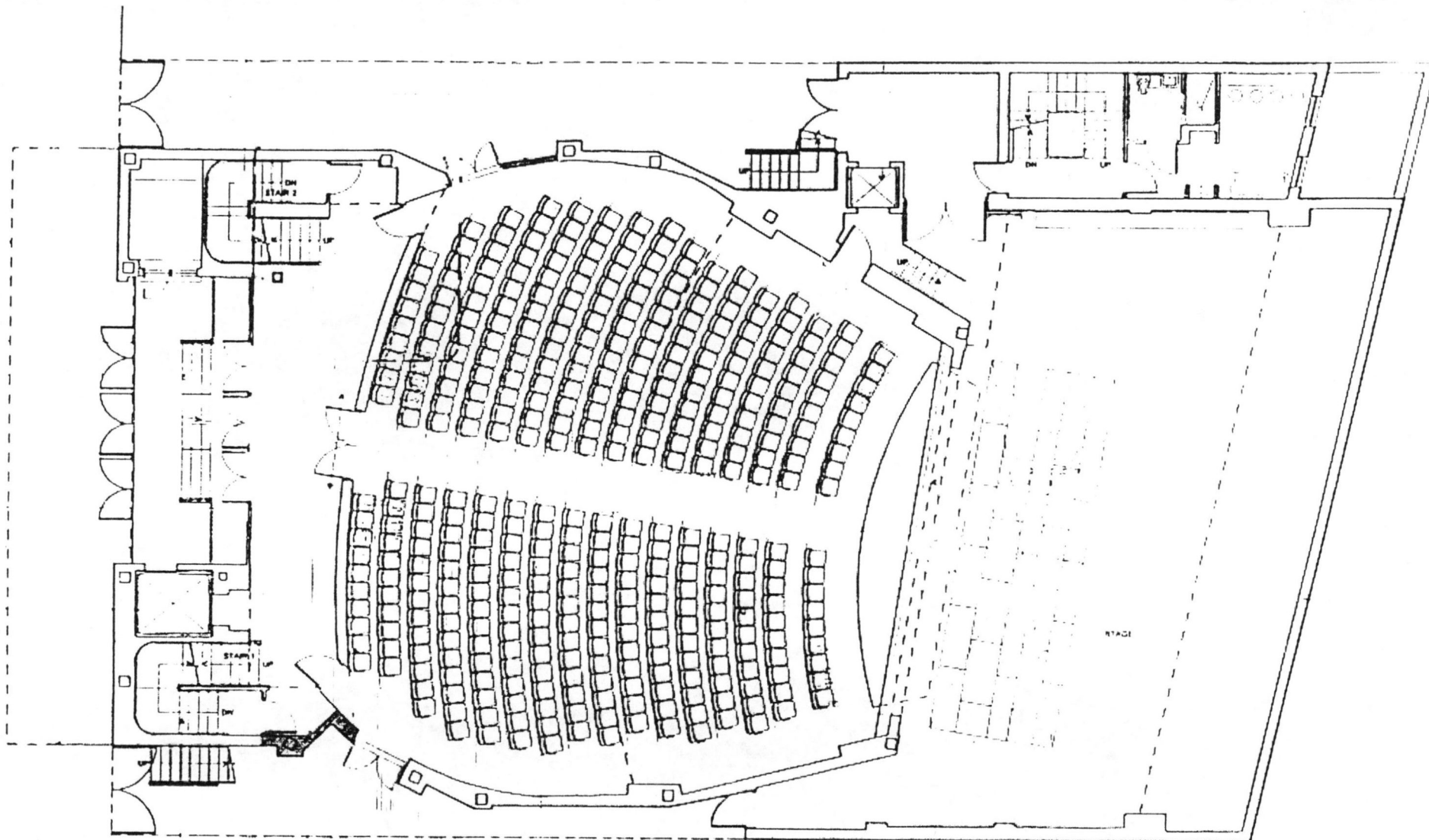
Geo. Hartman
Maps No. 7 & 167

Mathew Horn, SUBWAY
Lib. 145 P.358

Francis Child Jr. Lib. 67 P.101
69 P.96 Maps 68 & 69
248 P.125

Biltmore Theater
261-265 West 47th Street
New York County, NY

Boundary indicated by dark line.
Sanborn Map, 1990.
Scale: 1" = 120'



The Biltmore Theater

Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 3 • February 2004

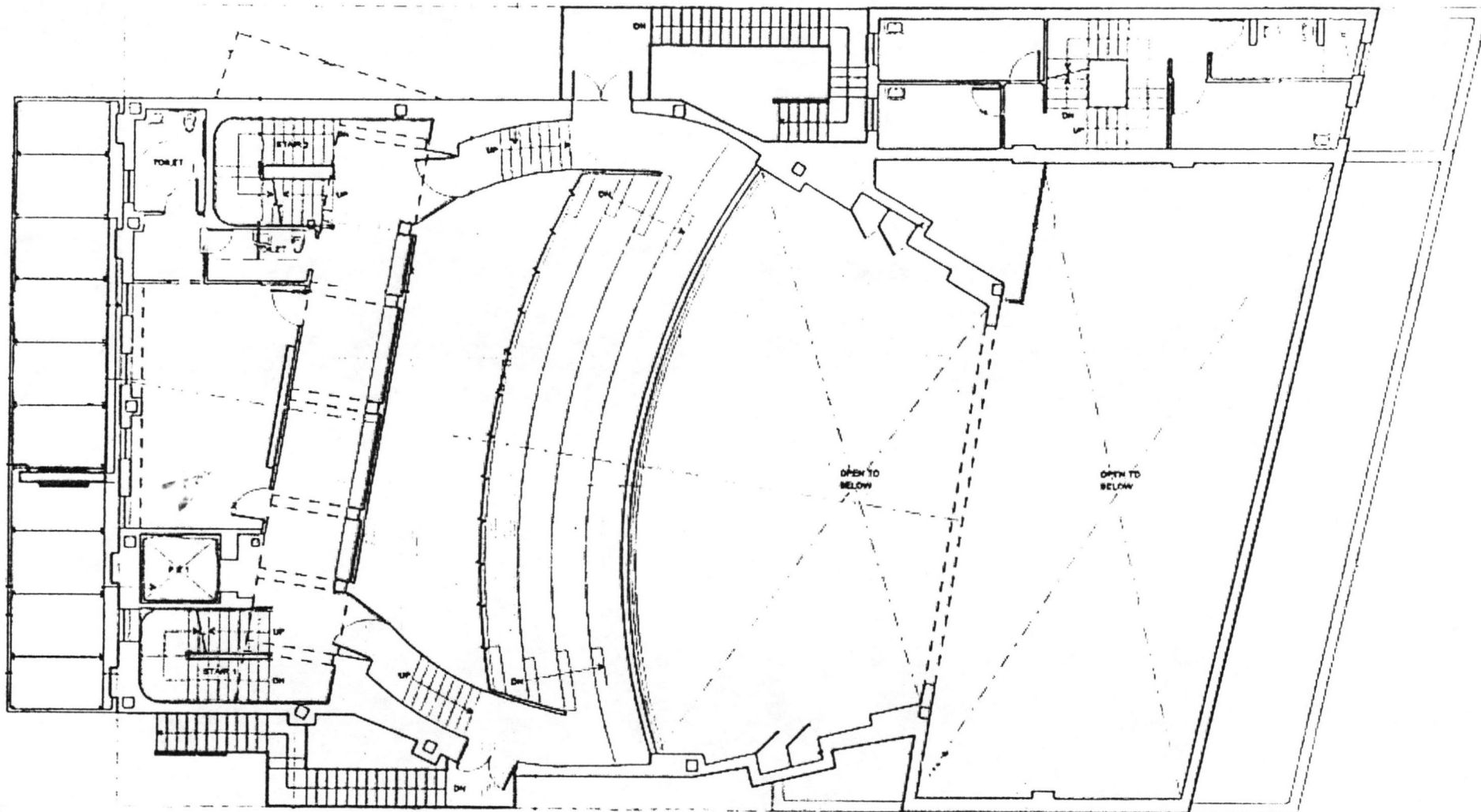
Photo Locations

Note: This drawing is for photo location only. It is not intended as an accurate record of spaces, features or dimensions.

Orchestra
Level

Higgins & Quasebarth
270 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10012
(212) 274-9468





The Biltmore Theater

Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 3 • February 2004

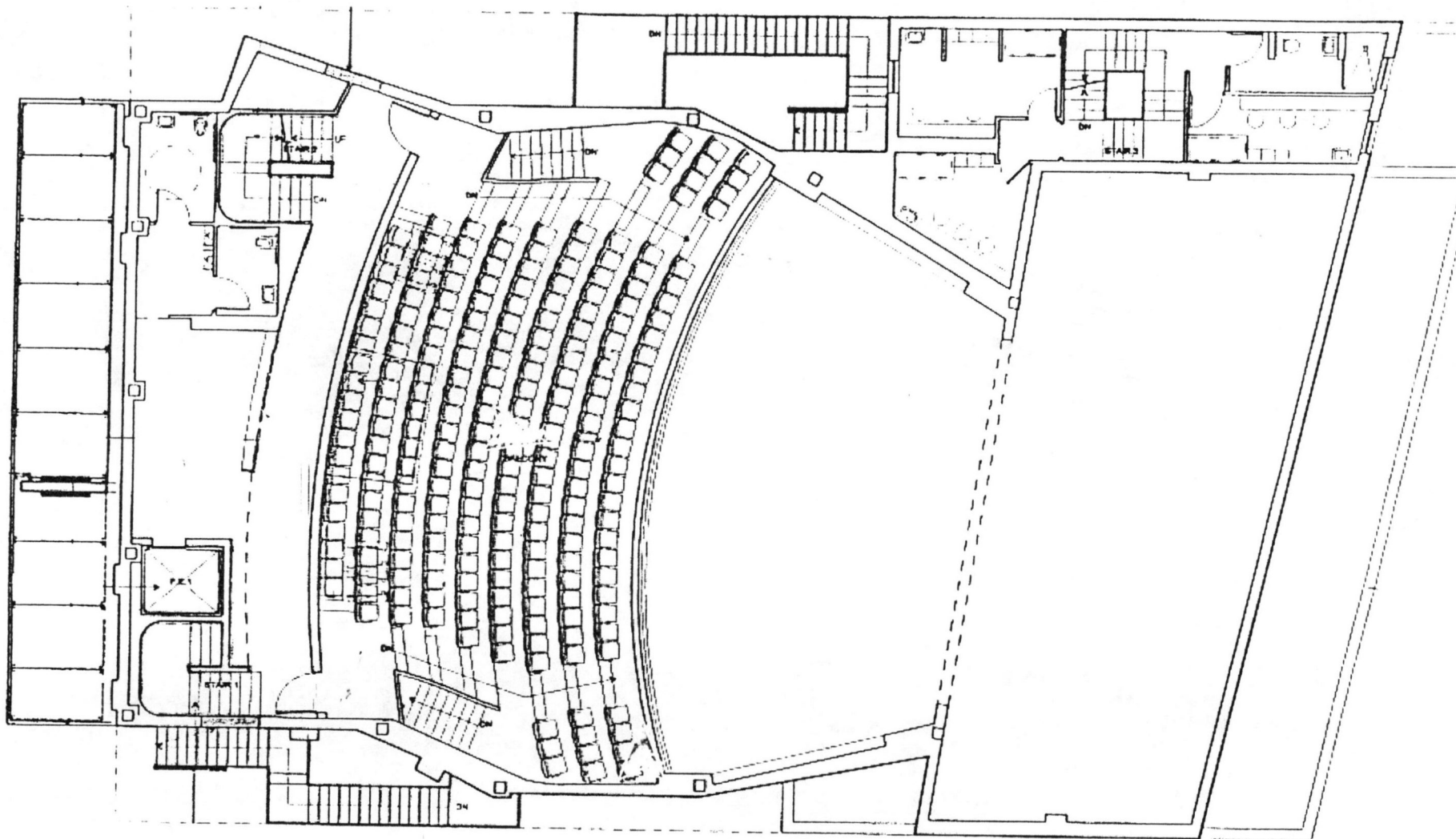
Photo Locations

Note: This drawing is for photo location only. It is not intended as an accurate record of spaces, features or dimensions.

Mezzanine
Level

Higgins & Quasebarth
270 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10012
(212) 274-9468





The Biltmore Theater

Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 3 • February 2004

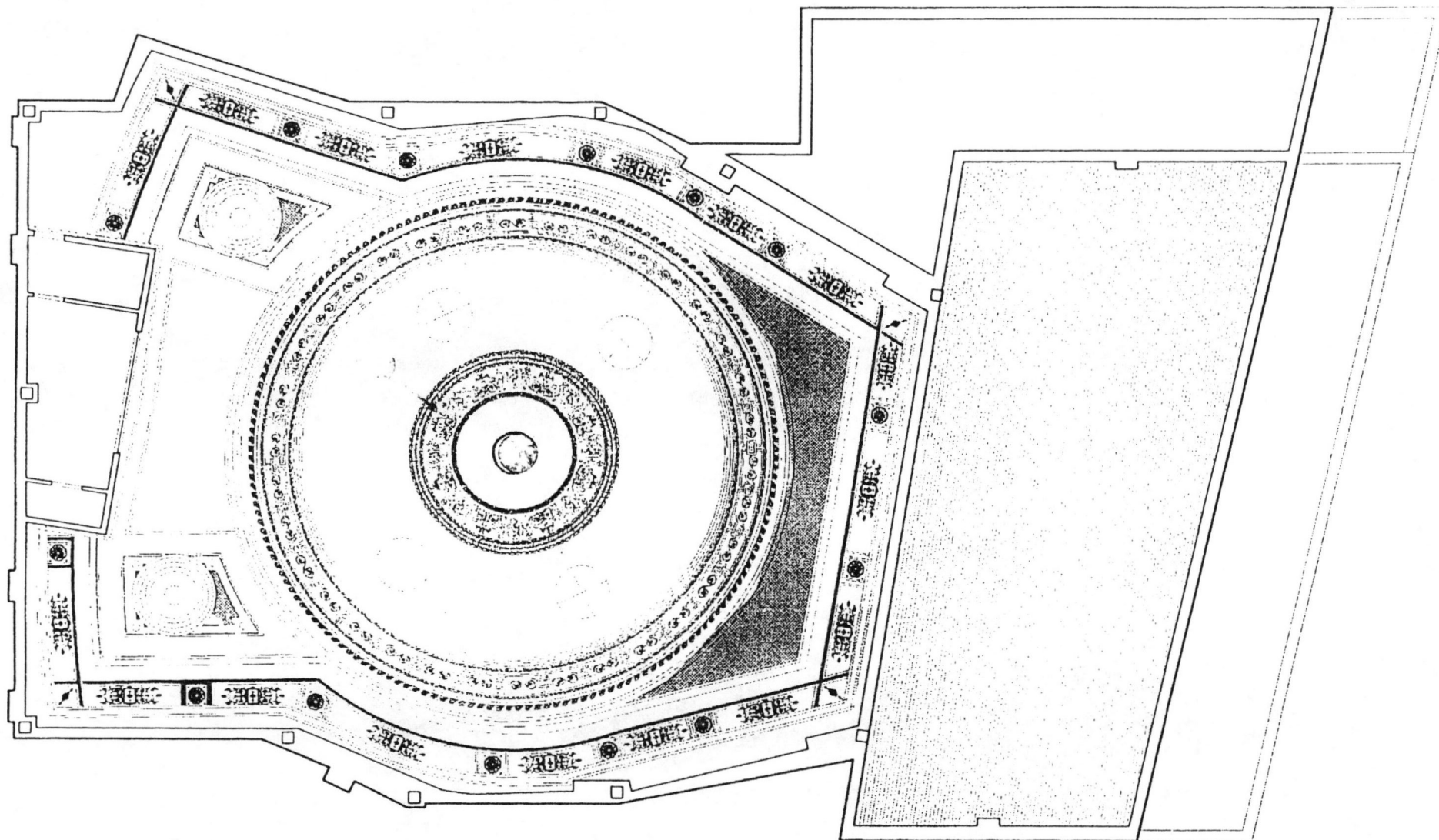
Photo Locations

Note: This drawing is for photo location only. It is not intended as an accurate record of spaces, features or dimensions.

Balcony Level

Higgins & Quasebarth
270 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10012
(212) 274-9468





The Biltmore Theater

Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 3 • February 2004

Photo Locations

Note: This drawing is for photo location only. It is not intended as an accurate record of spaces, features or dimensions.

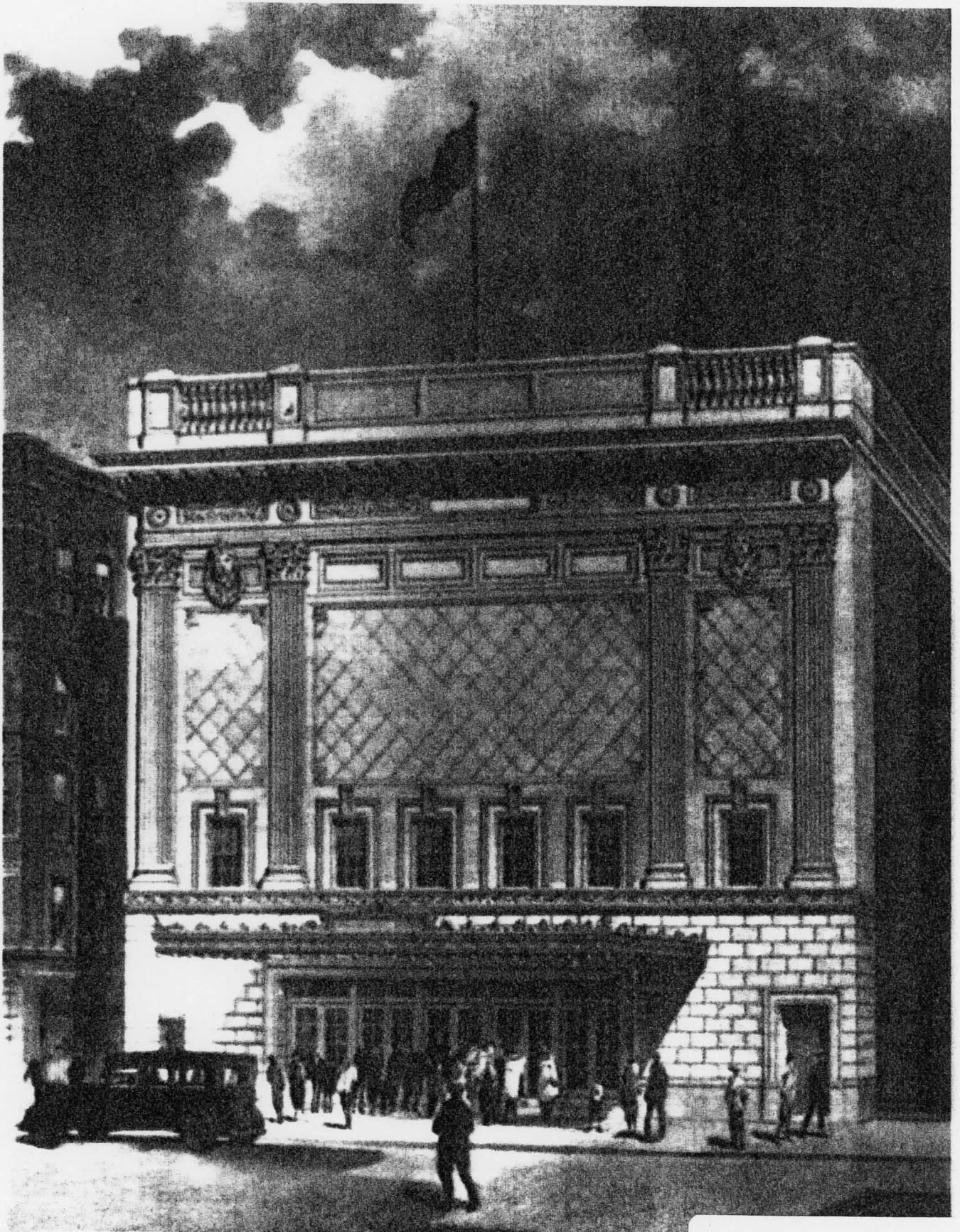
Auditorium
Ceiling

Higgins & Quasebarth
270 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10012
(212) 274-9468

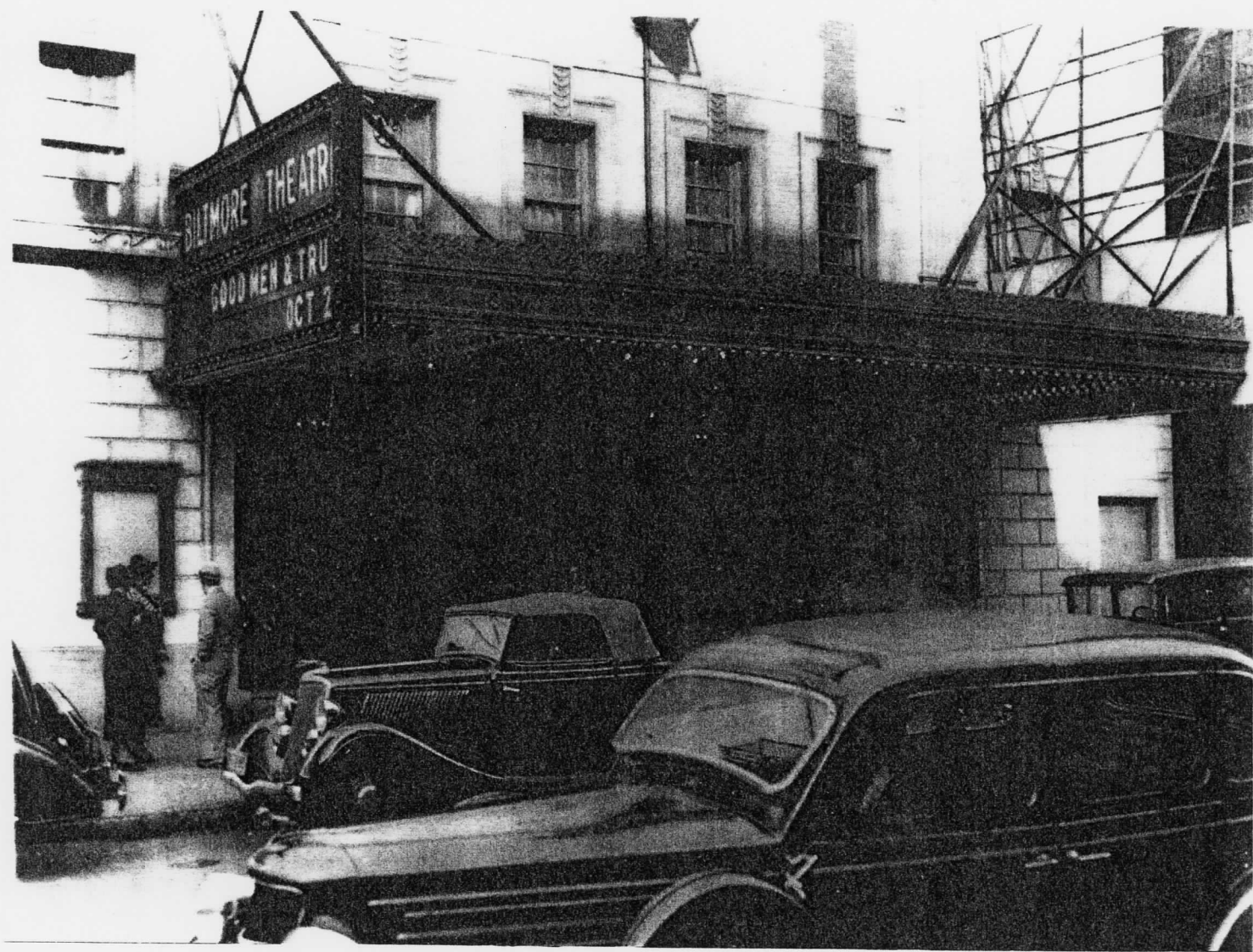




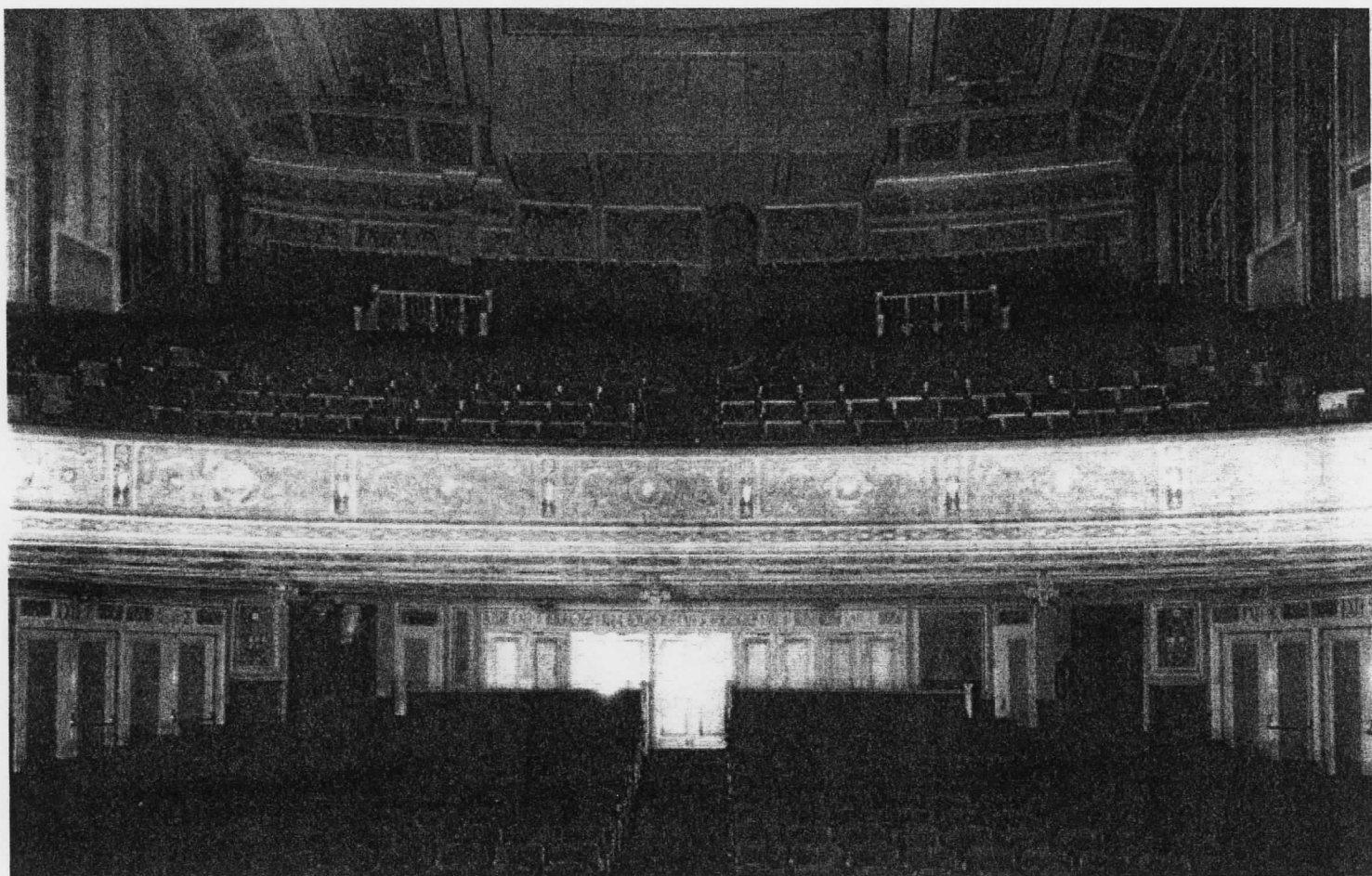
Biltmore Theater 1925
View from the east



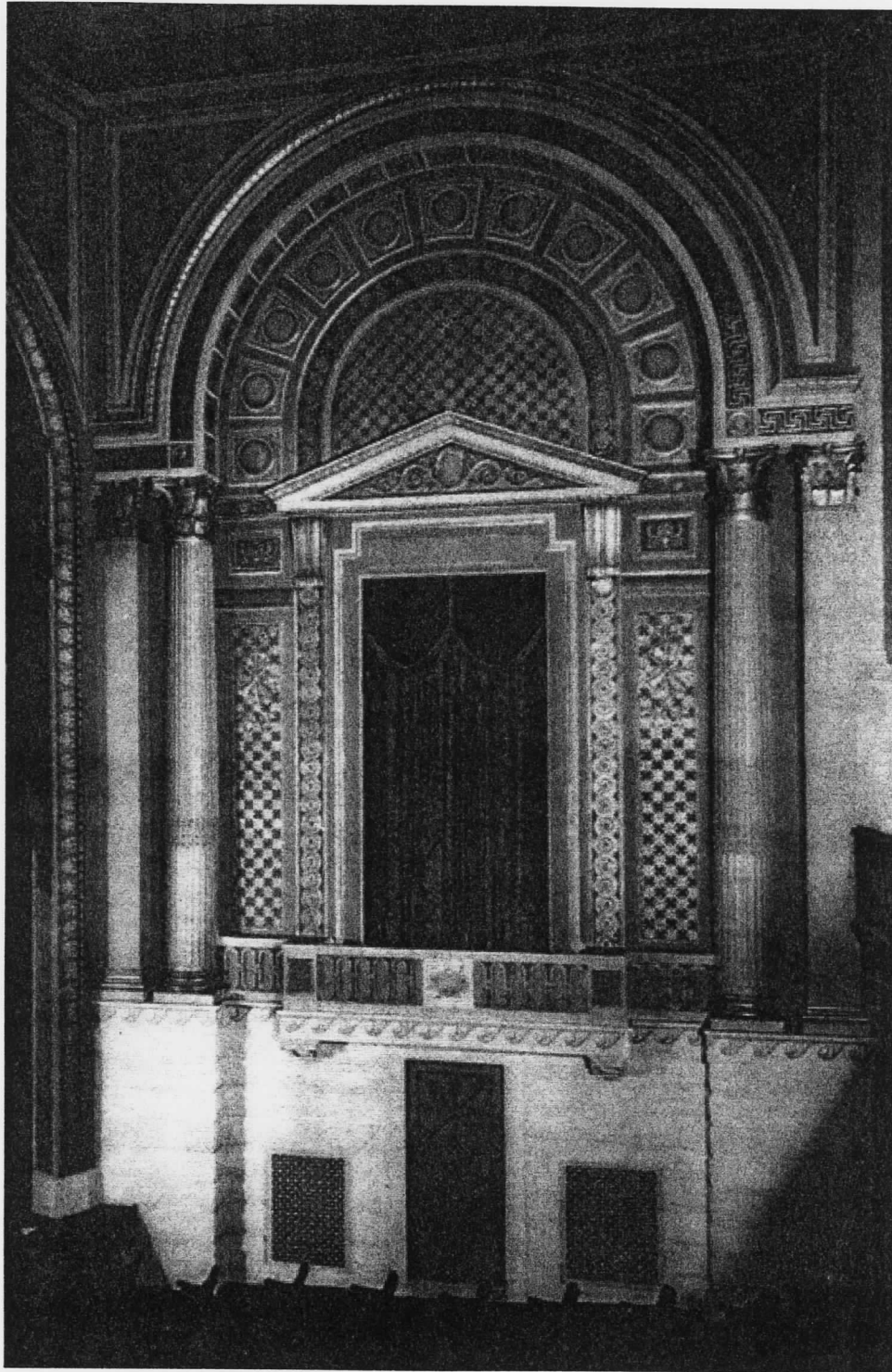
Biltmore Theater ca. 1925
Exterior rendering



Biltmore Theater ca. 1935
Entrance Marquee



Biltmore Theater ca. 1925
Interior looking out from stage



Biltmore Theater ca. 1925
Interior "pseudo box"

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Biltmore Theater
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, New York

DATE RECEIVED: 9/15/04 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/12/04
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/27/04 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/29/04
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 04001203

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 10/27/04 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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



BILTMORE

Biltmore Theater
New York Co, NY
1.



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

2.



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

3



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

4



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

5



Biltmore Theater
New York County, NY

6



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

7.



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

8



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

9



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

10



PREMIER CIRCLE DINING

Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

11.



Biltmore Theater
New York County, N.Y.

12



Biltmore Theater
New York ~~County~~ ~~Rock~~, N.Y.

13



Biltmore Theater
New York County, NY

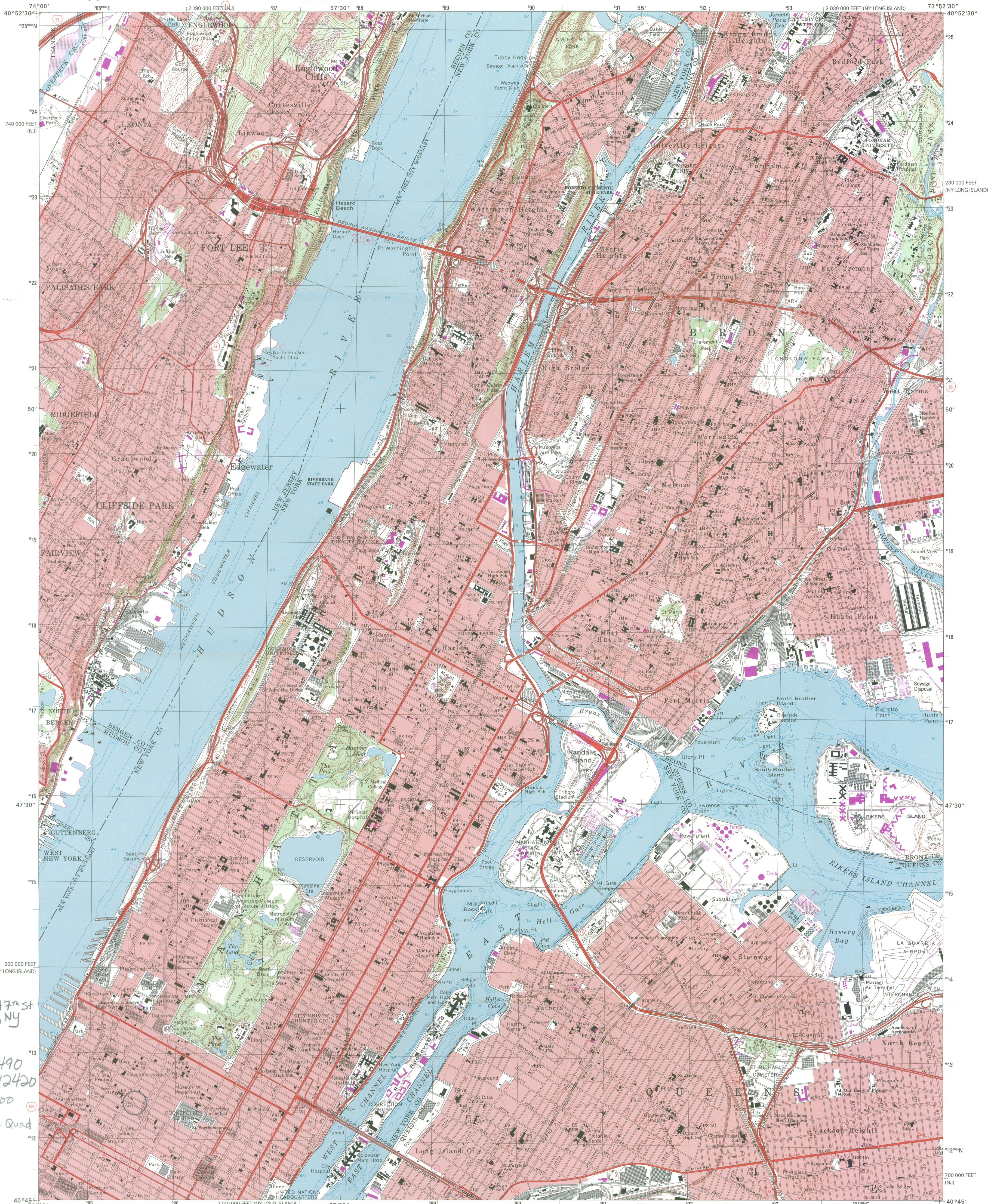
14



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



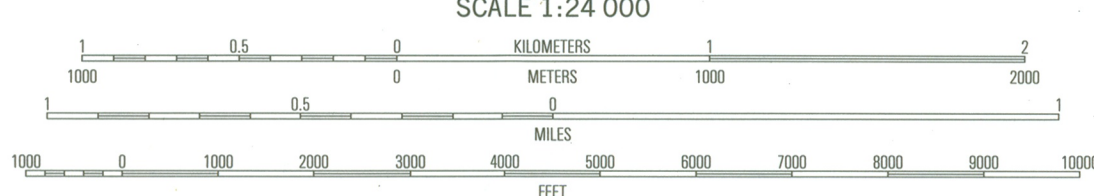
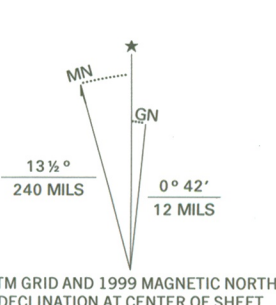
CENTRAL PARK QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Biltmore Theater
261-265 W 47th St
New York, NY

Zone 18
Easting: 585490
Northing: 4512420
Scale: 1:24000
USGS
Central Park Quad

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



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 COMPLEYS 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



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway
Secondary highway
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road

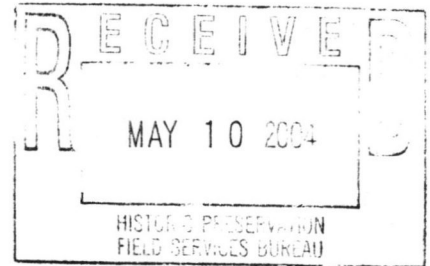
1	2	3	1 Hackensack
4	5	5 Flushing	5 Jersey City
6	7	8 Jamaica	8 Jamaica

CENTRAL PARK, NY-NJ
1995

NIMA 6265 IV SW-SERIES V821



BILTMORE THEATER, LLC
1700 Broadway - 34th Floor
New York, New York 10019
(212) 333-3353
Facsimile - (212) 333-3466



May 5, 2004

Ms. Kathy Howe
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
Peebles Island
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Dear Ms. Howe:

As the owner of the Biltmore Theater, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support of the proposed listing of this building on the National Register of Historic Places.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Richard Gordon", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Richard Gordon, Esq.
Designee

RG/fg



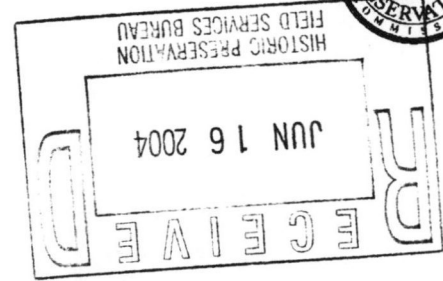
The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

1 Centre Street, 9th 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



June 10, 2004

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: Biltmore Theater, 261-265 West 47th Street, 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 Biltmore Theater at 261-265 West 47th Street in Manhattan for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Commission supports the nomination of the Biltmore Theater. On November 10, 1987, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate the interior of the Biltmore Theater a New York City interior landmark. Built in 1925-26, the Biltmore Theater represents a typical and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Its handsome Adamesque interior is laid out in a horseshoe-shaped plan that is highly unusual among Broadway houses.

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 the Biltmore Theater 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

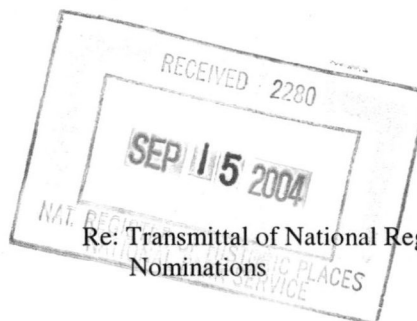


New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau
Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

Ms. Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW
8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

September 10, 2004



Re: Transmittal of National Register
Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to transmit five new National Register nominations to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register as follows:

Biltmore Theater, New York, New York Co., NY
Everett-Bradner House, Goshen, Orange Co., NY
Pickens Hall, Heuvelton, St. Lawrence Co., NY
George Mason House, Webster, Monroe Co., NY
Peekskill Freight Depot, Westchester Co., NY

Thank you for your assistance in processing these proposals. Please feel free to call on me at 518-237-8643 ext. 3258 if any questions arise.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Peckham
National Register
Program Coordinator

enclosures