1. NAME
   HISTORIC: Villard Houses
   AND/OR COMMON: Villard Houses

2. LOCATION
   STREET & NUMBER: 29 1/2 East 50th Street; 24-26 East 51st Street
   451, 453, 455, 457 Madison Avenue
   CITY, TOWN: New York
   STATE: New York

3. CLASSIFICATION
   CATEGORY: X-STRUCTURE
   OWNERSHIP: X-PRIVATE
   STATUS: X-UNOCCUPIED
   PRESENT USE: X-COMMERCIAL

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
   NAME: Archbishopric of New York
   STREET & NUMBER: 1011 First Avenue
   CITY, TOWN: New York
   STATE: New York

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
   COURT HOUSE: New York Hall of Records
   STREET & NUMBER: 31 Chambers Street
   CITY, TOWN: New York
   STATE: New York

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
   TITLE: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
   DATE: September 30, 1968
   DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
   CITY, TOWN: New York
The Villard Houses are five separate residences contained within a brownstone structure in the style of a Neo-Italian Renaissance palazzo with a U-shaped plan. The complex includes 451 Madison Avenue and its extension, 29 1/2 East 50th Street, which occupy the south wing of the palazzo on 50th Street; 453 and 455 Madison Avenue, which occupy the center wing; 457 Madison Avenue, which occupies two-thirds of the north wing along 51st Street; and 24-26 East 51st Street at the eastern end of the north wing. The three wings enclose an elegant courtyard entered through an arched wrought-iron gateway.

The detailing and proportions of the building were inspired by the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome. The brownstone facade is three stories with a high basement and attic. The hipped roof is covered with brown tile. A seven story tower rises unobtrusively from the final two bays of the southern wing, 451 Madison Avenue. The gradation of floors is emphasized by decreasing the story height. Band courses consist of a bold torus molding at the basement; an architrave, plain frieze and cornice between the first and second floor; a plain band course at the third floor; and a torus molding below the attic. The roof is set off by a cornice of dentils, egg and dart molding, and foliated modillions. Brownstone chimney shafts rise above the roofline.

The north and south wings have five bays facing the interior courtyard, three bays on Madison Avenue, and seven bays on 50th and 51st Streets. An additional two bays have been added to 451 Madison by the seven-story tower, and a one-and-one-half story entrance and porch were added to 24-26 East 51st Street. The center wing has seven bays with a central five-bay pavillion set off by quoins. The corners of the building and tower are also articulated by quoins.

The window fenestration adds much to the refinement of the facades. Openings on the basement level are covered with grates except for those of the north wing on Madison Avenue, which have been converted into display cases. The windows of the first floor, like the Cancelleria, are framed by a simple arch with a rosette medallion at each spandrel. Second story windows are set off by an architrave, plain frieze, and projecting cornice. Third story windows combine the arch and rosette with a straight pediment and resemble the Cancelleria's second story windows.
The focal point of the building is the courtyard. The courtyard is entered through an arched, floral, wrought-iron gateway, which suspends a Florentine lantern. The arch springs from brownstone gateposts inlaid with panels or urns and garlands and crowned by colossal ball finials. The central pavillion of the middle wing rises above a five bay arcade with granite columns and rosette medallions. The windows of the central pavillion are grouped in pairs. The entrances to 453 and 455 Madison recede behind the middle bay of the arcade in barrel vaults decorated with gilded rosette coffers, and egg and dart and bead and reel moldings. The doors to 451 and 457 Madison Avenue rise above pedestal stairs, have a plain frieze and projecting cornice, and Florentine lamps on either side. Balconies with circular medallions supported by foliated brackets emphasize the second story central bays of the courtyard and facades of 451 and 457 Madison Avenue.

The one and one-half story addition to the north wing at 24-26 East 51st Street extends 20 feet beyond the back of the building and 64 feet along the back of the central wing. It is entered through a monumental arched loggia adorned with terracotta plaques, ornamental brackets and rosettes. The extension is in stretcher bond brick with cast iron muntins at the windows.

The south wing of the Villard Houses contains stained glass by L.C. Tiffany and by La Farge Decorative Glass Company, murals by George W. Breck and John La Farge, and marble sculpture by Augustus St. Gaudens. Much of its architectural woodwork was executed by Joseph Cabus, and its decorative painting, gilding, mosaic, and panelling were done by the interior decorating firms Sarre & LePelley, L. Marcotte & Co., Herter Brothers, and Allard & Co.

The wing's Music Room or Gold Room combines a ceiling in the Italian style with wood wainscoting in a French Renaissance style. Gold brocade covers the walls. The floor is white mahogany and English oak. Large mural paintings at either end of the room are "Art" and "Music" by John La Farge.
The floors of the south wing's dining room are teakwood planks with ebony edge strips and teakwood dowels with an Italian walnut border. The mantel is red verona marble with sculpture by Augustus St. Gaudens. In the former library on the second floor, the walls are American walnut and the coffered ceiling contains three murals by George W. Breck and various crests of publishing firms.

In 1948, the south wing was converted into office space for the Archbishopric of New York by Voorhees, Walker, Foley & Smith, and considerable care was taken to leave the original interior intact.
The Villard Houses are one of the earliest and most distinguished examples of the Neo-Italian Rennaissance style in New York City, and their inhabitants were important figures in the history of American journalism and railroads. As a complex of brownstone residences, they represent one of the most sophisticated urban groupings of their time. The interiors of the Villard Houses contain some of the most beautiful rooms that remain from that era. The Villard Houses display a quality of workmanship no longer duplicable and contain works of several significant 19th century artists in America. They are incomparable and irreplaceable examples of design and craftsmanship.

The Villard Houses were erected by Henry Villard on land acquired from the Trustees of St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1881. At that time, the area was dominated by Columbia College, whose imposing Tudor Gothic buildings, the library and Hamilton Hall, stood on Madison Avenue at 49th and 50th Streets. On Fifth Avenue, mansions of eclectic style were beginning to replace brownstone row houses. The twin Vanderbilt houses at Fifth Avenue and 52nd Street, erected between 1880 and 1884, may have inspired Villard to build near by.

Henry Villard was a journalist, railway promoter and financier. He owned the New York Post and was president of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Villard married Helen Frances Garrison, the only daughter of William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist. Their son, Oswald Garrison Villard, was the publisher and editor of The Nation magazine.

In 1882, Villard commissioned the firm of McKim, Mead & White to design a six-house complex. The building was one of the firm's first designs in the Neo-Italian Renaissance style, a style which was later used in many of their most significant buildings, such as the Metropolitan Club (1893), the University Club (1899), 998 Fifth Avenue (1910) and the Racquet and Tennis Club (1918).

Villard occupied the south wing of the building, 451 Madison Avenue, which was completed in 1884. He lived there less than a year, however, when a decline in the Northern Pacific Railroad forced him to sell this building. In 1886, Elizabeth Mills Reid bought the

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Two houses in the north wing were combined in 1922 to make five, the present number.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached sheet.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

UTM REFERENCES

<table>
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<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Alexandra Cushing Howard, Research Consultant

ORGANIZATION
New York Landmarks Conservancy

DATE
July 22, 1975

STREET & NUMBER
17 Battery Place

TELEPHONE
212-425-4085

CITY OR TOWN
New York

STATE
New York

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

TITIE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE
8/20/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE
SEP 2 1975

DATE
8/28/75
The original occupant of 24-26 East 51st Street was Roswell Smith, a lawyer and publisher who founded the magazines, *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century*. In 1886, Smith commissioned a one and one-half story addition to the north wing by Babb, Cook & Willard. The house was occupied from 1921 to 1949 by Harris Fahnestock's daughter, Helen Cambell Hubbard, who also owned 455 Madison Avenue during that period.
Account Books of McKim, Mead & White, New York Historical Society.

Conveyances to 1950, Office of the Registrar of New York County.

Department of Prints & Photographs, Museum of the City of New York.


New Building Files, New York City Department of Buildings.

Property: Vanderbilt Houses

State: N.Y.
Working Number: 8.27.75.1608

TECHNICAL SKETCH: Acreage missing

CONTROL:
- OK 8.27.75
- OTHER

HISTORIAN:
- Accept w/r e 2/27/75

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN:
- Accept 8/27/75

ARCHEOLOGIST:

OTHER:

HAER:
- Inventory
- Review

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF:
- Accept 8/27/75

BRANCH CHIEF:

KEEPER:

National Register Write-up: 10.7-75
Federal Register Entry: 10.7-75

Send-back
Re-submit
Entered: SEP 2, 1975

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service WASO No. 7
PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNIVERS STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME
HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON
Villard Houses

2 LOCATION
CITY, TOWN
New York

VICINITY OF

COUNTY
New York

STATE
New York

3 PHOTO REFERENCE
PHOTO CREDIT
Andrew Gorczynski

DATE OF PHOTO
June, 1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT
I.M. Pei & Partners, 600 Madison Avenue, NY, NY 10022

4 IDENTIFICATION
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Above roofline, looking east. View shows exteriors on Madison Avenue and East 50th Street.
1. NAME
HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON
Villard Houses

2. LOCATION
CITY, TOWN
New York

VICINITY OF

COUNTY
New York

STATE
New York

3. MAP REFERENCE
SOURCE
U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Geological Survey, 7.5 Minute Series

SCALE 1:24,000

DATE 1966

4. REQUIREMENTS
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON
Villard Houses

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN
New York

VICINITY OF

COUNTY
New York

STATE
New York

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE
Bromley Tax Map

SCALE
1"=80'-0"

DATE
1975

4 REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES
ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEW YORK

Date Entered SEP 2 1975

Name Location

Villard Houses New York

New York County

Also Notified

Hon. Jacob K. Javits Mr. Orin Lehman
Hon. James L. Buckley Commissioner
Hon. Edward I. Koch Parks and Recreation
Regional Director, North Atlantic Agency Building #1
Region Empire State Plaza

Albany, New York 12238

PR MMott 9/10/75
NR Data Sheet

NAME: Vincent Marney

LOCATION:
24-26 E 50th St.
451, 453, 455, 457 Madison Ave.

CITY, TOWN: New York
STATE: New York
COUNTY: New York

OWNER OF PROPERTY: PRIVATE
ADMINISTRATOR: (underline)

NPS REGION: (CIRCLE) N. Atl Antic

FEATURES:
- INTERIOR: Substantially intact-1
- EXTERIOR: Substantially intact-2
- INTERIOR, EXTERIOR, ENVIRONS: Not applicable-0

CONDITION:
- Excellent
- Good
- Fair

ACCESS:
- Yes-restricted
- No access

WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES
WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? YES

ADAPTIVE USE:
- Saved? YES

FUNCTION(S): (use vocabulary words)
- THEN: The hotel
- NOW: (will be adapted into luxury hotel complex)

SIGNIFICANCE:

- ARCHAEOLOGY PREHISTORIC
- ARCHAEOLOGY HISTORIC
- AGRICULTURE
- ARCHITECTURE
- ART
- COMMERCE
- COMMUNICATIONS
- CONSERVATION
- ECONOMICS
- EDUCATION
- ENGINEERING
- EXPLORATION
- INDUSTRY
- INVENTION
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- LAW/Gov't/poliCies
- LITERATURE
- MILITARY
- MUSIC
- PHILOSOPHY
- POLITICS/Gov't
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER SPECIFIC
- RELIGION
- SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
- SCIENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- HEALTH
- RECREATION
- SETTLEMENT
- SOCIO/CULTURAL
- URBAN & COMMUNITY PLANNING

CLAIMS
- "first"
- "oldest"
- "only"
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Second Renaissance Revival

architect/builder: Weehawken, Made White (Joseph Morris Wells)

landscape/garden designer: A. C. Tiffany

interior decorator: John T. Ford

ETHNIC GROUP:

NAMES: personal

Henry Villard / journalist

railway promoter, financier, owner, New York Post

Helen Frances Harrison Villard, his wife

Oswald Harrison Villard, son

Elizabeth Mills Reid, daughter 1886

events

Whitelaw Reid, her husband / journalist

institutional

Archbishop of New York

DATES:

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (Specific date or 1/4 of century): 1882-86, 1909-19

DATE(S) OF "MAJOR" ALTERATIONS:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATE(S):

SOURCE: (OF NOMINATION)

PRIVATE COUNTY

STATE MUNICIPAL

LOCAL GOV'T OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY:

Acreage: (to nearest tenth of an acre)

not specified

COMMENTS: (include architectural information here)

Brownstone, 4 1/2 stories, U-shaped, hip roof, 10 interior chimneys, entrance carved stone, regular fenestration, quoin, 3 story corner turret to north, string course, cornice of dentile, egg and dart molding, 

significance: (maximum two sentences)

One of the earliest and most distinguished Republican residences to be built in New Jersey at the time of the Panic of 1837.
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Second Renaissance Revival

architect/m.builder: McKim, Mead & White (Joseph Morris Wiles)
engineer: 
artist/artisan: 
builder/contractor: J.H. Fowle, S. C. Telford

ETHNIC GROUP: 

NAMES: personal
Harry Villard / Journalist
Railway promoter, financier, owner, New York Post
Helen Frances Garrett, his wife

events
Theodore Harrison Villard, son
Elizabett Millo Reed, daughter 1886
Whitelaw Reid, his husband / Journalist

institutional
Archbishopric of New York

DATES: DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (Specific date or 1/4 of century): 1882-86, 1909-10

DATE(S) OF "MAJOR" ALTERATIONS:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATE(S):

SOURCE: (OF NOMINATION) PRIVATESTATE LOCAL GOV'T MUNICIPAL COUNTY

ACREAGE: (to nearest tenth of an acre) not specified

COMMENTS:
Brownstone, 4 1/2 stories, modified U-shape, hipped roof with shed gable dormers; terminate chimneys, entrance courtyard with arcade and side entrances, 2nd-story stone balconies, window door architraves, quoining, modillion cornice, 7-story S. corner tower; avish interior features decorative painting, gilding, mosaic, paneling, and stained glass; alterations. One of earliest examples of Second Renaissance Revival; sophisticated urban grouping designed by McKim, Mead and White for successful financier and publisher, Henry Villard, one of several prominent journalists & businessmen including Whitelaw Reid.