

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCERS use only

received FEB 29 1980

date entered MAY 6 1980

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Bronx Central Annex - U. S. Post Officeand/or common Bronx General Post Office

2. Location

street & number 558 Grand Concourse not for publicationcity, town Bronx vicinity of _____ congressional district 21state New York code 036 county Bronx code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

4. Owner of Property

name U. S. Postal Service
c/o Frank Viola, PostmasterBronx General Post Office
street & number 558 Grand Concoursecity, town Bronx vicinity of _____ state New York

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bronx County Courthousestreet & number 851 Grand Concoursecity, town Bronx state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LP-0837
Landmarks Preservation Commission has this property been determined eligible? ☒ yes ☐ nodate 1976 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ localdepository for survey records Landmarks Preservation Commissioncity, town New York state New York 10007

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Bronx Post Office occupies the entire block between East 149th and East 150th Streets, the Grand Concourse and Spencer Place. Its smooth, gray brick walls rise above a granite terrace which varies in height along the side elevations to conform to the slope of the street. Broad, shallow steps lead up to the three entrances facing the Grand Concourse. The terrace is enclosed by a classically inspired balustrade, flanked at the entrance steps by blocks decorated with highly stylized swags and rosettes and carrying flagpoles. The ornate foliate bronze flagpole bases have a rather baroque character.

The most prominent features of the building are the graceful window openings set within marble arches which contrast handsomely with the smooth, gray brick walls. Radial brick arches, above impost block level, enframe the marble arches of the window openings. The three openings which contain the bronze entrances are set within deep reveals. The facades are crowned by a simple continuous stone band course set with stylized rosettes and containing the inscription "Bronx - United States Post Office - New York."

Two sculptures, larger than life-size, affixed to the front facade add further interest to the building. The designs were chosen from over 400 models submitted in a national competition held in 1936. "The Letter," designed by Henry Kreis, portrays a mother and her child receiving a message from an absent member of the family. "Noah," by Charles Rudy, depicts the Patriarch, with a deer in one arm, straddling the ark, and receiving the dove's message that the flood was subsiding.

The interior is ornamented with simplified marble Ionic columns and pilasters, and lighted by four globe light fixtures. The main lobby has been modernized, with new writing desks and post office boxes. Of considerable artistic and historical interest are thirteen mural panels in the main lobby, most of which are eighteen feet in height. They are the work of Ben Shahn and his wife, Bernarda Bryson. Completed in August 1939, the murals depict the varied occupations of American workers, and were inspired by Walt Whitman's I See America Working.

Bulletin boards have been removed from the lower portions of the four murals along the west wall. They were to be replaced by plaques explaining the murals, but due to personnel changes, this has yet to be accomplished.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1935-37

Builder/Architect

Thomas Harlan Ellett

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The elegant simplicity and finely executed detail of the Bronx Post Office, designed by Thomas Harlan Ellett and built in 1935-37, make it an exceptional example of 20th-century government architecture. Its style combines modified classical ornament with simple detailing, and successfully integrates sculpture by Henry Kreis and Charles Rudy.

The most noteworthy features of the Bronx Post Office are the thirteen interior murals by Ben Shahn and his wife Bernarda Bryson. These murals, sponsored by the U. S. Treasury's Section of Fine Arts, were chosen after a competition involving 198 contestants. The various panels, inspired by Walt Whitman's I See America Working, represent a panorama of American agriculture and industry, with the artist's intention being "to show the people of the Bronx something about America outside New York."¹

Ben Shahn (1898-1969) is best known for his social protest canvases, particularly for a sequence of works on the theme of the Sacco-Vanzetti case in the 1920's. After World War II, Shahn's themes expanded in scope to deal with a variety of psychological rather than socio-political subjects. His best known work from this period is Death of a Miner of 1949.

A description of the Bronx Post Office in Architectural Forum for June, 1938 states:

A distinct modern influence and the continuing tradition of 'government classic' are the two conflicting tendencies which have resulted in the first signs of vitality in American post office design, and the new Bronx Post Office is an excellent example of best recent work...the building subtly suggests a Georgian precedent without the use of traditional detail...²

Thomas Harlan Ellett (1880-1951) designed a variety of private homes and institutions. His best known works are the Cosmopolitan Club on East 66th Street in Manhattan, and the library in Wilton, Conn.

¹James Thrall Soby, Ben Shahn-Paintings, N.Y.: George Braziller, Inc., 1963, 14.

²"U. S. Post Office, Bronx, N.Y.," Architectural Forum, vol. 58 (June, 1938), 480.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property Approx. 1 1/2 acres

Quadrangle name Central Park

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 18 590490 4519000
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property occupies Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2343, Lot 400.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David J. Framberger, Research Consultant Contact: Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph
for Joan R. Olshansky, National Register Coordinator 518-474-0479

organization Landmarks Preservation Commission date September, 1979

street & number 305 Broadway telephone (212) 566-7577

city or town New York state New York 10007

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

date

2/21/80

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Bruce Van Dusen
Keeper of the National Register

date

May 6, 1980

Attest:

Lynn A. Beebe

date

April 22, 1980

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED

MAY 6 1980

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Bronx Central Annex - U.S. Post Office
Bronx County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Although the Bronx Post Office is less than fifty years old, it was determined eligible for the National Register in 1976 based upon the value of its interior murals by Ben Shahn, and its significance as an example of Works Progress Administration architecture.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

MAY 6 1980

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Bronx Central Annex Borough of the Bronx
U.S. Post Office ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1
CONTINUATION SHEET

Baldwin, Carl. "Shahn's Bronx Post Office Murals: The Perils of Public Art," Art in America (May-June, 1977), 15-16, 19.

Britannica Encyclopedia of American Art. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation, 1973.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. Bronx Post Office Designation Report (LP-0837), by Marjorie Pearson. New York: City of New York, 1976.

Soby, James Thrall. Ben Shahn-Paintings. New York: George Braziller, Inc. 1963.

"Thomas Harlan Ellett, 1880-1951," AIA Journal, v. 17 (February, 1952), 71-75.

"U. S. Post Office, Bronx, N.Y.," Architectural Forum, vol. 58 (June, 1938).

12 W.P.

8 W.P.

150+h

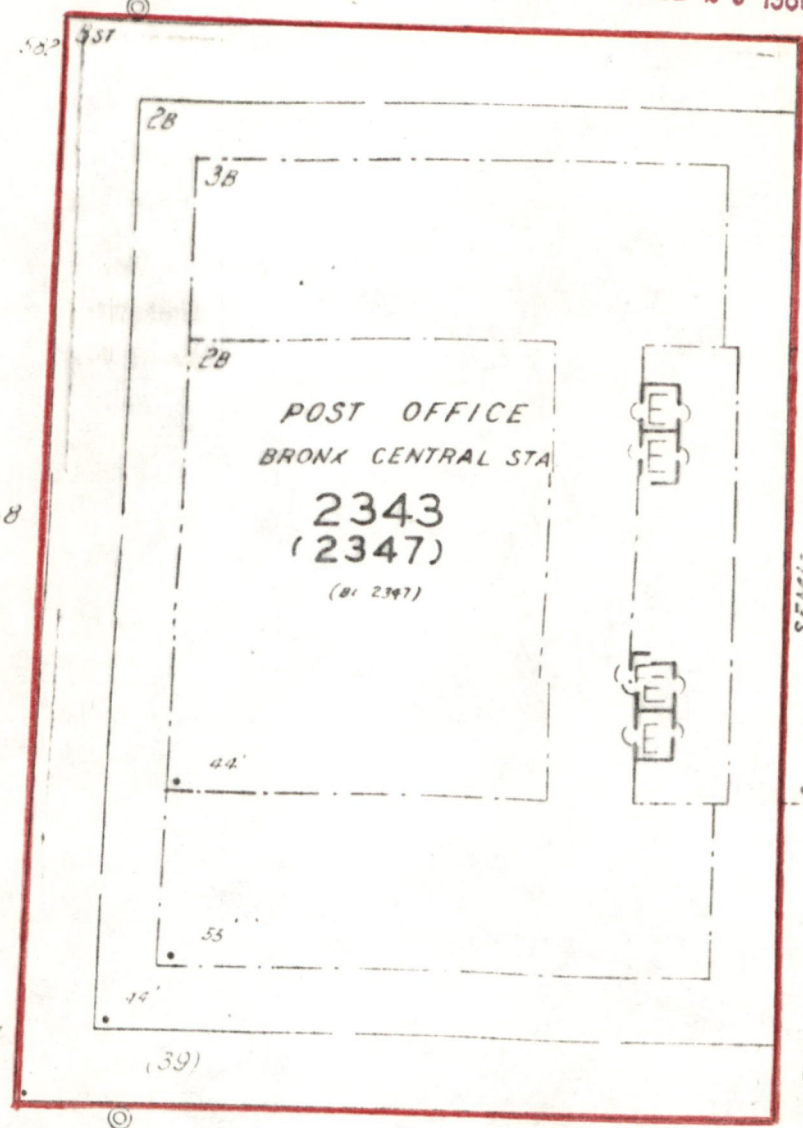
STREET

8 W.P.

FEB 29 1980

GRAND CONCOURSE

PLACE



149+h

STREET

ANTHONY J. GRIFFIN

490
GRAND CONCOURSE
585C
B. 5' F.P.
SECURITY MUTUAL INS. CO.
OFF
FPX-1965
(C. H. ST. 1)
F-1-2

BRONX POST OFFICE
Bronx County, New York
Insurance Maps of New York:
Borough of the Bronx, v. 9N, plate 56
New York: Sanborn Map Company, updated 1979.



0821 8 X 001

MAY 6 1980

Property Bronx Central Annex - U.S. Post Office

State NY - Bronx

Working Number 2-25-80 687

80002584

TECHNICAL

CONTROL

Photos 5

Maps 2

HISTORIAN

This Post Office is an unusually modern looking piece of government architecture from the 1930's. Probably most notable and significant features are the series of murals depicting Americans working by Ben Shahn and his wife Bernarda Bryson. Although it is not 50 yrs. old, the Post office was determined eligible in 1976 based upon the significance of the murals. P. Reed. 4/21/80

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

Although not quite 50 years old, the p.o. is sufficiently close to 50 yrs. to allow for valuation, particularly w/in the context of Federal architecture. Significant primarily for the expression of American labor/industry in the murals; also possesses archt. value.

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept
L. Reepe
4/21/80

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up _____

Federal Register Entry 2.3.81

Send-back _____

Re-submit _____

Entered MAY 6 1980



Bronx Central Annex-U.S. Post Office

1. Bronx Post Office

558 Grand Concourse

Bronx, New York *Bronx County*

Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

View from southwest 1979

FEB 29 1980

1/5
MAY 6 1980



2. Bronx Post Office
558 Grand Concourse
Bronx, New York *BRONX County*
Reg. at : New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo 1979
Main Lobby

FEB 29 1980

2/5

MAY 6 1980

*Bronx Central Annex - U.S. Post
Office*

INQUIRY



THIS BUILDING WAS
DURING THE ADMINIS-
TRATION OF
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
HENRY MORGENTHAU JR. JACOB V. FORD
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY
CHRISTIAN JOY PEOPLES WEN
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC DEFENSE ADMINISTRATION
LOUIS A. SIMON NICHOLAS
SUPERVISING ARCHITECT
THOMAS HARLAN ELLET

1931
ALBERT GOLDMAN - POSTMASTER



3. Bronx Post Office
558 Grand Concourse

Bronx, New York *Bronx County*
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo 1979

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

Interior Mural

Bronx Central Annex - U. S. Post. Office

3/5-

MAY

6 1980

FEB 29 1980



4. Bronx Post Office
558 Grand Concourse

Bronx, New York *Bronx County*

Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo 1979

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

Interior Mural

Bronx Central Annex - U.S. Post Office

4/5

MAY

6 1980

FEB 29 1980



5. Bronx Post Office
558 Grand Concourse
Bronx, New York *Bronx County*
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo 1979
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

Interior Mural

Bronx Central Annex - U.S. Post Office

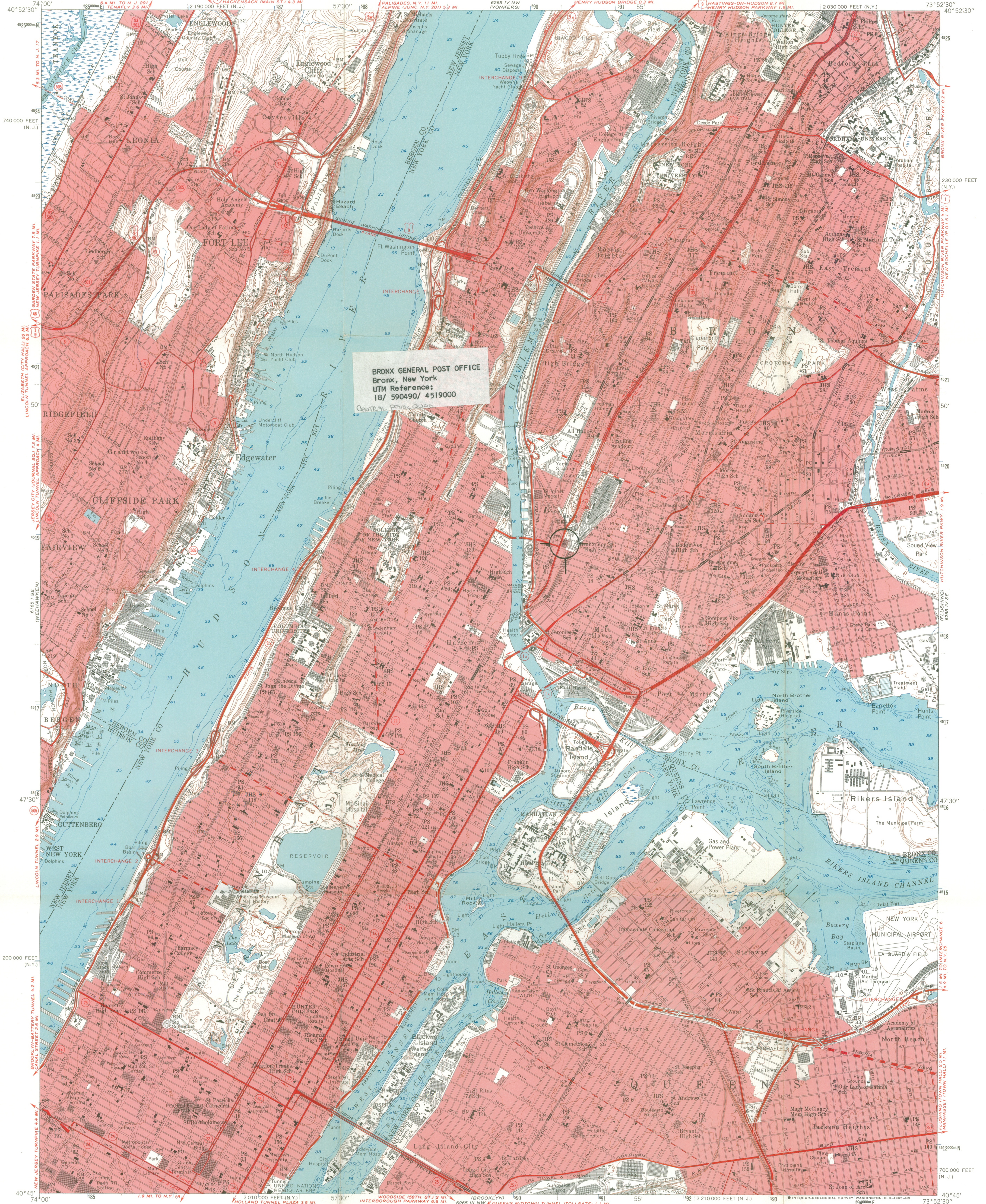
FEB 29 1980

5/5

MAY 6 1980

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

CENTRAL PARK QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SW/4 HARLEM 15' QUADRANGLE



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

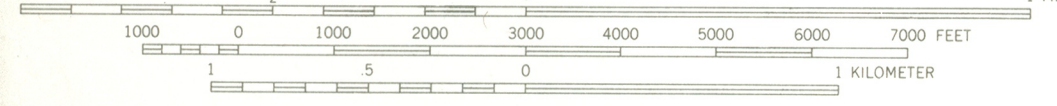
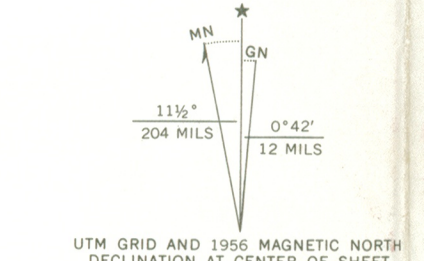
Control by USC&GS, New Jersey Geodetic Survey, and City of New York Board of Estimate and Apportionment

Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs taken 1954, and from USC&GS charts T-4567, T-5089, T-5264, T-5278, T-5448, T-5449, T-5451, T-5452, T-5453, T-5458, and T-5778. Topography by photogrammetric methods and planetable surveys. Field check 1956

Hydrography compiled from USC&GS charts 226, 274, 745, 746, and 747 (1956)

Polycyclic projection. 1927 North American datum 10,000-foot grids based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone, and New Jersey coordinate system 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
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, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



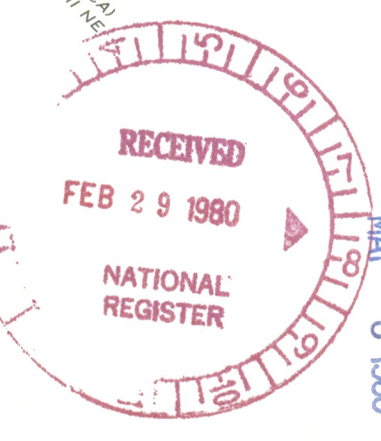
ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route

CENTRAL PARK, N.Y. - N. J.
SW/4 HARLEM 15' QUADRANGLE
N4045-W7352.5/7.5

1956

AMS 6265 IV SW-SERIES V821



ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEW YORK

Date Entered MAY 6 1980

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Monsignor McGolrick Park and Shelter Pavilion	Brooklyn Kings County
Bronx Central Annex-U.S. Post Office	Bronx Bronx County
Hammond House	Hawthorne vicinity Westchester County
West End Collegiate Church and Collegiate School	New York New York County
Wilbur House	Fairport Monroe County
Richardson's Tavern	Perinton Monroe County
Customs House	Sodus Point Wayne County
23rd Regiment Armory	Brooklyn Kings County
Johnson-Jolls Complex	Orchard Park Erie County

Also Notified

Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan

Honorable Jacob K. Javits
Honorable Shirley A. Chisholm
Honorable Robert Garcia
Honorable Peter A. Peyser
Honorable Ted Weiss
Honorable Frank Horton
Honorable Frederick W. Richmond
Honorable Jack Kemp

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Orin Lehman
Commissioner
Parks and Recreation
Agency Building #1
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

NR Byers/bjr 5/13/80

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.