

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

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

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received FEB 29 1980

date entered MAY 6 1980

1. Name

historic American Fine Arts Society

and/or common Art Students League

2. Location

street & number 215 West 57th Street not for publication

city, town New York vicinity of congressional district 18

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 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 American Fine Arts Society

street & number 215 W. 57th Street

city, town New York vicinity of state New York 10019

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Register's Office

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Landmark Preservation Commission (LP-0255) has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date December 10, 1968 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmark Preservation Commission 305 Broadway

city, town New York state New York

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 American Fine Arts Society, now the Art Students League, is an elegant building located on West 57th Street in midtown Manhattan. The front portion of the building is four stories in height, and a central light court divides this from a lower wing which extends through the block to 58th Street. The 57th Street facade is executed in limestone, and is a formal, symmetrical composition inspired by French Renaissance designs.

The ground floor features severe, rectangular windows unified by a sill which runs the width of the building. The main, round-arched entrance is centrally located and flanked by candelabra-like spindles. The doors themselves are recessed behind wrought-iron gates. A small cornice separates the ground and second floors, and serves as a sill for a central grouping of three round-arched windows at the second floor which are ornamented with delicate foliate designs and framed by sculptured colonettes. Small rectangular windows topped by ornate gables punctuate the end bays at this floor.

A wide bandcourse makes the transition to the third floor, which features fenestration similar to that on the floor below. The central window grouping is composed of rectangular openings with heavy, stone, transom bars and mullions. These openings are framed by flat pilasters which extend through another band-course to frame three foliate panels, centered above the window bay, which feature the words, "Painting," "Architecture," and "Sculpture."

A heavy classical cornice projects above the third floor level, and this is topped by a stone balustrade with decorative urns, and a clay tile mansard roof.

The 58th Street facade is about three stories in height. A wrought-iron fence runs along the sidewalk, protecting a row of slanted skylights. Above the skylights are several courses of buff-colored brick, which form a base for a dark brick facade with blind recessed arches, topped by a corbelled brick cornice. At either end of the facade are arched entrances covered by square porches. The porches are supported by square columns with delicate ornament similar to that on the 57th Street facade.

The interior of the building is used as gallery and studio space, and still retains some of its original details. The foyer features marble mosaic floors, oak woodwork, shouldered architrave moldings, and stained-glass transom panels. The second floor gallery has a large fireplace mantel, but most of the studio space is simple and utilitarian, especially in the rear section of the building.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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	1891–92	Builder/Architect	Henry J. Hardenbergh in collaboration with: Walter C. Hunting John C. Jacobsen
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)			

The American Fine Arts Society, with its classical proportions and erudite use of French Renaissance ornament, is a fitting headquarters for one of the most important alliances of arts organizations in New York. The edifice was erected in 1891–92 according to the competition-winning design of prominent New York architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, in collaboration with Walter C. Hunting and John C. Jacobsen. It served as headquarters for the American Fine Arts Society, incorporated in 1889 to provide facilities and exhibitions for the Society of American Artists, The Architectural League, and the Art Students League.

The design of the American Fine Arts Society building was determined by a competition arranged by the Committee on Sites and Plans of the Architectural League. The building was to be constructed on West 57th Street on a plot which the American Fine Arts Society had purchased for \$154,000 in May of 1890, shortly after the formation of the society. The conditions of the competition were announced in the summer of 1890. Included on the jury of award for the competition were William M. Chase, President of the Society of American Artists; Russell Sturgis, President of the Architectural League; E.D. French, President of the American Fine Arts Society; Chairman Marquand of the American Fine Arts Association; and Edward Kendall of the Sites and Plans Committee.

Designs for the new headquarters building were to be submitted by September 1, 1890, and in the case of disagreement among the jury, prominent architect William Morris Hunt would join the committee to settle the dispute. Over thirty-five entries were submitted, and by October, 1890, the jury had chosen the designs of three finalists: H. J. Hardenbergh and Associates, Edmund B. Wells, and Babb, Cook & Willard. Six other firms received honorable mentions.

By December of 1890, the jury had awarded the contract for the winning design to Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, in association with Walter C. Hunting and John C. Jacobsen. Hardenbergh had served as Secretary to the Committee on Sites and Plans. The New York Times characterized the design of the new building as that "of the Renaissance of Frances I of France."¹

Henry Janeway Hardenbergh (1874–1918) was a leader in the field of apartment and hotel design. He won early recognition for his famed Dakota Apartments (1880–84) on Central Park West, and also used many of the same medieval motifs on an industrial building at 376–80 Lafayette Street. Besides the Art Students League, his most widely recognized works were the Plaza Hotel of 1907 in New York, and the Copley Plaza of 1912 in Boston.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

(see attached site map)

Quadrangle name Central Park, N.Y., N.J.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 1 8 5 8 6 0 0 0 4 5 1 3 0 6 0
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C
Zone Easting Northing

D
Zone Easting Northing

E
Zone Easting Northing

F
Zone Easting Northing

G
Zone Easting Northing

H
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property occupies Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1029, lot 223.

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

David J. Framberger, Research Consultant

contact: Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph 518-474-0479
name/title for Joan R. Olshansky National Register Coordinator

organization Landmarks Preservation Commission

date December 1979

street & number 305 Broadway

telephone

city or town New York

state New York

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

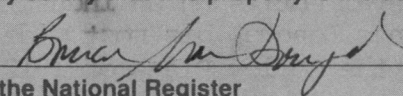
title Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

date

2/26/80

For HCRS use only

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

for 
Keeper of the National Register

date

May 6, 1980

Attest:



date

April 21, 1980

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received FEB 29 1980

date entered

MAY 6 1980

Continuation sheet American Fine Arts Society
New York County Item number 8

Page 2

The American Fine Arts Society was formed in 1889 from separate organizations for the purpose of "securing a permanent home which could serve as a clubhouse for members and fellows of the societies, as a place where instruction in the fine arts could be given, and where the work of artists could be exhibited"² Nearly all major fine arts exhibitions were held in the American Fine Arts Society's galleries until 1941, when the National Academy of Design, which had absorbed the Society of American Artists, acquired its own building and moved to Fifth Avenue. The Architectural League established new quarters in 1927. The Art Students League purchased the interests of the other two tenants in 1941 and is now sole owner of the American Fine Arts Society building.

The Art Students League, founded in 1875, held its first art classes in a building on Fifth Avenue and Sixteenth Street. The school occupied space at two other locations in Manhattan before they moved to Fifty-Seventh Street in 1892. The roster of former league students, members and instructors reads like a who's who in American art. The school has had a tremendous influence on art in this country. The membership represents every idiom of the arts, whose creative efforts have been the recipients of many national awards and prizes. Artists associated with the Art Students League include: George Inness, John LaFarge, William Merritt Chase, Robert Henri, George Bellows, John Sloan, Thomas Hart Benton, Max Weber, Reginald Marsh, John Steuart Curry, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Daniel Chester French, Gertrude V. Whitney.

Footnotes

¹New York Times, December 21, 1890, 11

²Ibid.

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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MAY 6 1980

American Fine Arts Society

Continuation sheet New York County

Item number 9

Page 1

Bibliography

"A Choice Between Three," New York Times, XL, no. 12210 (October 15, 1890), 8.

"An Elaborate Structure," New York Times, XL, no. 12267 (December 21, 1890), 11

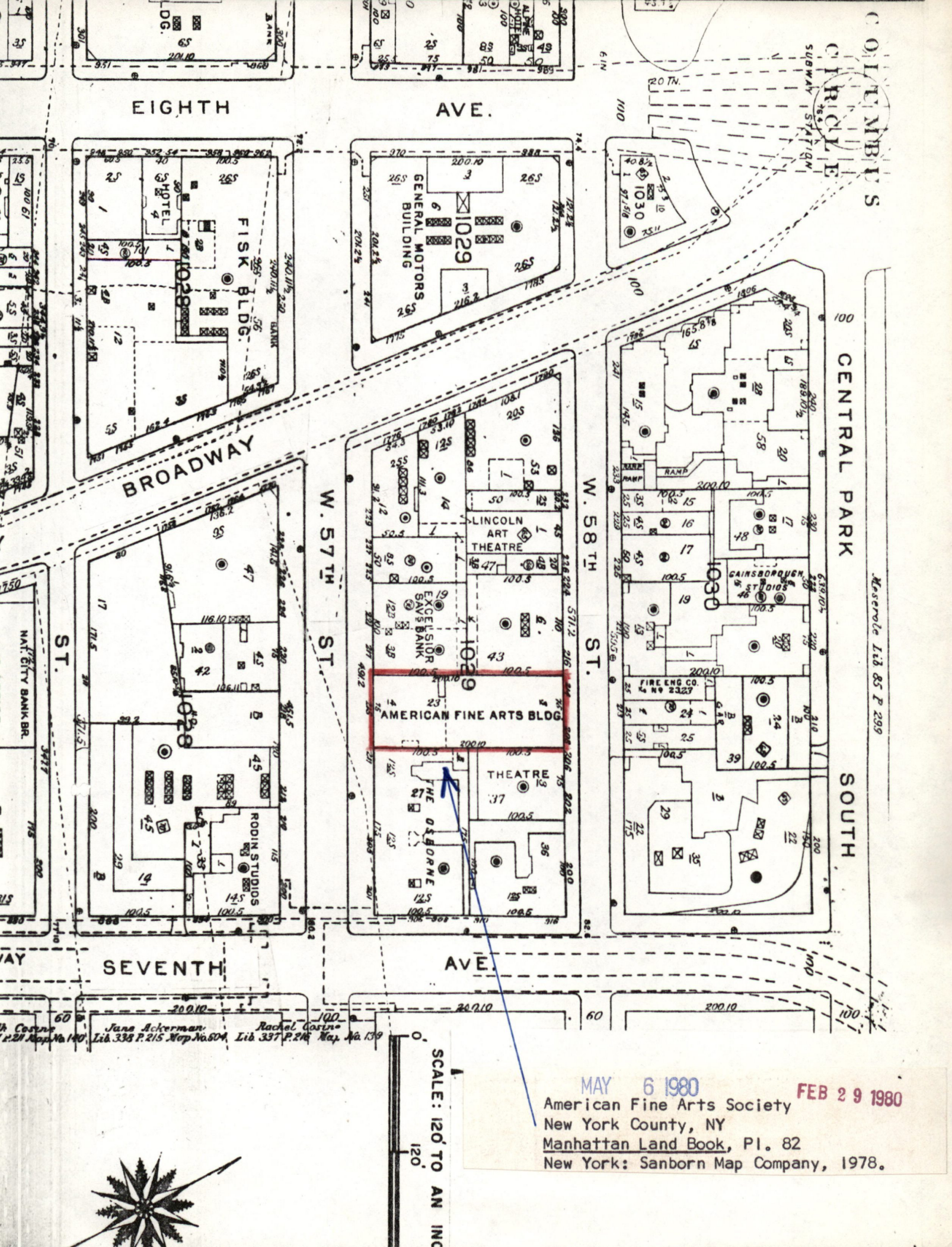
"Architects to Compete," New York Times, XXXIX, no. 12141 (July 27, 1890), 8.

Klonis, Stewart, President, American Fine Arts Society. Letter of July 7, 1966 to John Benson, Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Landgren, Marchal E. Years of Art: The Story of the Art Students League of New York, New York: R.M. McBride & Company, 1940.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. The American Fine Arts Society Designation Report (LP-0255). New York: City of New York, 1968.

New York City Department of Buildings. Block and Lot Records. New Buildings Permit #1309-1891.



EIGHTH

AVE.

COLUMBIA
CIRCLE
SUBWAY STATION

BROADWAY

W. 57TH ST

W. 58TH ST

CENTRAL PARK

SOUTH

SEVENTH

AVE.

SCALE: 120 TO AN INCH

MAY 6 1980

FEB 29 1980

American Fine Arts Society
New York County, NY
Manhattan Land Book, Pl. 82
New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1978.

Property

American Fine Arts Society

State

NY - New York

Working Number

2-29-80 696

80002662

TECHNICAL

Photos 4
Maps 2

CONTROL

HISTORIAN

Associated w/ prominent turn-of-the-century architect, Henry J. Hardenbergh, the Am. Fine Arts Society Bldg. is an intact late 19th c. interpretation of Renaissance design derived from French Renaissance influences. Also associated with an important arts organization in NYC from its construction until 1941.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

*Accept
L. Becker
4/21/80*

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

*Accept
L. Becker
4/21/80*

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up _____

Send-back _____

Entered MAY 6 1980

Federal Register Entry 2.3.81

Re-submit _____



1. American Fine Arts Society

215 West 57th Street

New York NY *County*

MAY

6 1980

Photo by: Stephen Senigo, 1979

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

57th Street facade

1/4

FEB 29 1980



2. American Fine Arts Society

215 West 57th Street

New York, NY *County*

Photo by: Stephen Senigo, 1979

MAY

6 1980

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

View of 57th Street **facade** towards east

214

FEB 29 1980



3. American Fine Arts Society

215 West 57th Street

New York, NY County

Photo by: Stephen Senigo, 1979

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

MAY

6 1980

Second floor interior

3/4

FEB 29 1980



4. American Fine Arts Society

215 West 57th Street

New York, NY *County*

Photo by: Stephen Senigo, 1979

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

MAY 6 1980

58th Street Facade

4/4

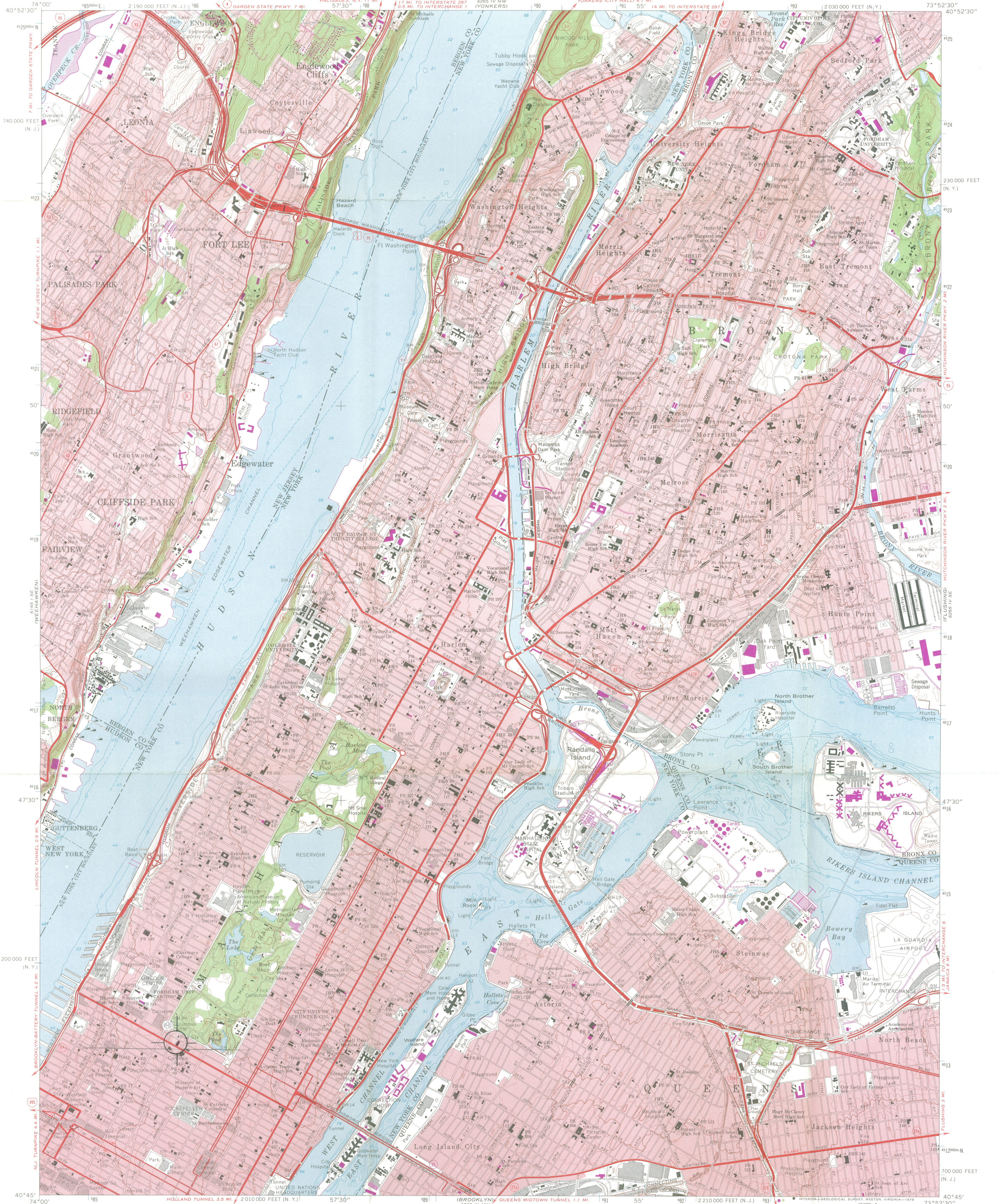
FEB 29 1980

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



CENTRAL PARK QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SW 1/4 HARLEM 15 QUADRANGLE

Central Park, N.Y. - N.J.
American Fine Arts Society
New York County, NY
UTM Reference: 18/586000/4513060



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Revised in cooperation with New York
Department of Transportation
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and New Jersey Geodetic Survey
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods 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 from aerial photographs
taken 1954 and planimetric surveys 1956.
Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1966
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 226, 274, 745,
746, and 747 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid 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

SCALE 1:24,000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET-DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE AVERAGE RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2 FEET
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, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route ——— U.S. Route ——— State Route ———

CENTRAL PARK, N.Y. - N.J.
SW 1/4 HARLEM 15 QUADRANGLE
N4045-W7352.5/7.5

1966
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6265 IV SW-SERIES V821

RECEIVED
FEB 29 1980
NATIONAL
REGISTER

MAY 6 1980

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEW YORK

Date Entered MAY 6 1980

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Federal Reserve Bank of New York	New York New York County
Seguine House	Staten Island Richmond County
St. Augustine's Chapel	New York New York County
Building at 45 East 66th Street	New York New York County
Scribner Building	New York New York County
American Fine Arts Society	New York New York County
Waldo, Gertrude Rhinelanders, Mansion	New York New York County
Church of Notre Dame and Rectory	New York New York County
New York Public Library, 115th Street Branch	New York New York County

Also Notified

Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan
Honorable Jacob K. Javits
Honorable John M. Murphy
Honorable S. William Green
Honorable Charles B. Rangel

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.