

**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 19 1980

## 1. Name

historic Lescaze House

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 211 East 48th 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\_\_\_ not for publication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

\_\_\_ district

☒ building(s)

\_\_\_ structure

\_\_\_ site

\_\_\_ object

### Ownership

\_\_\_ public

☒ private

\_\_\_ both

### Public Acquisition

\_\_\_ in process

\_\_\_ being considered

### Status

☒ occupied

\_\_\_ unoccupied

\_\_\_ work in progress

### Accessible

☒ yes: restricted

\_\_\_ yes: unrestricted

\_\_\_ no

### Present Use

\_\_\_ agriculture

\_\_\_ commercial

\_\_\_ educational

\_\_\_ entertainment

\_\_\_ government

\_\_\_ industrial

\_\_\_ military

\_\_\_ museum

\_\_\_ park

☒ private residence

\_\_\_ religious

\_\_\_ scientific

\_\_\_ transportation

\_\_\_ other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. William Lescaze

street & number 211 East 48th Street

city, town New York

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state New York

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. N.Y. County Register's Office

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York

state New York

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Landmarks Preservation Commission LP-0898

has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes ☒ no

date January, 1976

\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmarks 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

East 48th Street is a street of many uses and mixed building styles. A number of nineteenth-century townhouses still remain, while a tall glass and steel skyscraper rises at the corner of Third Avenue. In 1933, when William Lescaze remodelled the Italianate brownstone which stood on this spot and turned it into this modern house, his neighbors were quite dismayed about the effect the building would have on the street. Today, the William Lescaze House sits quietly among its neighbors, more forceful in its clean lines and good proportions than the most ornate Victorian rowhouse.

A few steps below street level, and recessed beyond the plane of the facade, was the entrance to the Lescaze architectural office, which extended almost to the rear of the lot, below the residence and patios. A handsome, solid glass brick wall shields the office from the street.

A high stoop at the left side, also recessed into the body of the house, leads up to the doorway of the Lescaze residence. To the right of the door at this level is the service area, lighted by a narrow band of "ribbon" windows with casements which accent the curve of the facade. Above this, the gray stucco facade (which was originally painted off-white) is dominated at the third and fourth floors by huge panels of glass block. They encompass almost the entire width of the building and are separated from each other only by a narrow strip of wall.

The interiors of the house are light and airy, with an easy, flowing sense of space. Neutral, light colors were chosen for their capacity to reflect the sun. Most of the furnishings and accessories, as well as the indirect lighting, were designed by Lescaze specifically for this house. A narrow staircase with a sweeping wood-trimmed bannister rises through the height of the house, from the eating and service areas of the first floor, through the bedroom areas of the second floor, to the airy, open living room on the third floor. The sense of light and air at this top level is provided by a large, circular skylight near the center of the room, as well as by the large expanse of clear glass at the rear. Lescaze's concern for capturing light is also seen in the gentle curve of the rear wall of the master bedroom, cantilevered out from the rest of the building to look over the gardens of Turtle Bay.

Lescaze's widow presently resides at the house and has maintained it and its furnishings as they were when he lived there. Lescaze also remodelled the adjacent townhouse at No. 209 East 48th Street which is not part of this nomination. Because it is occupied by Lescaze's son and his family, there is access to this building through the Lescaze house, on the third floor.

## 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 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 1933-34 Builder/Architect William Lescaze

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The house and office William Lescaze built for himself in 1933-34 embodies the theory and practice of one of the most influential and articulate exponents of the modern movement in architecture.<sup>1</sup> The architect's goal of creating a structure which would be expressive of life in the twentieth century was fully realized in this house through the imaginative development of the narrow site and rational planning which functionally separated residential from office space. The apparent simplicity of the design is the result of a sophisticated analysis of proportional relationships, while the smooth surface, crisp articulation and deliberate avoidance of ornament is related to design concepts of the "International Style."

Born in Switzerland in 1896, William Lescaze studied under Karl Moser at the Polytechnic School in Zurich. From this teacher Lescaze learned to take a fluid and liberal approach to design problems, rather than an authoritarian and historical one. Further training in construction details came when he worked for Henri Sauvage in France. After Lescaze came to the United States in 1920, he maintained his contacts with the European designers whose work he admired, such as Bruno Taut. One of the most important sources of inspiration for Lescaze came from Le Corbusier and his Citrohan projects of the early 1920's. In these and other houses by Le Corbusier, one can see many elements which Lescaze later employed in his own home: the geometric precision, the angularity, the smooth untextured surface, the absence of extraneous applied ornament, the horizontal grouping of windows to form continuous "ribbons" across the facade, and the use of flat roofs as outdoor living areas.

Lescaze began his career in this country in 1920 with the architectural firm of Hubbel and Benes in Cleveland. Nine years later he formed a partnership with George Howe and their first important commission was for the Oak Lane Country Day School in Philadelphia, sponsored by the Leopold Stowkowskis. In this building the simple, flat wall surfaces were pierced by openings whose location and size were solely determined by the disposition of the rooms inside. Here is a clear expression of the interpenetration of exterior and interior spaces, a feature very evident on his own home.

<sup>1</sup>The text of this report was taken almost in its entirety from the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report, Lescaze House (LP-0898), by Ellen Kramer, January, 1976.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Central Park

UTM NOT VERIFIED  
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	8
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5	8	6	8	40
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4	5	1	1	7	80
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1322, Lot 107.

See attached map

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## 11. Form Prepared By

Contact: Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph  
518-474-0479

name/title Virginia Kurshan, Research Consultant for  
Joan R. Olshansky, National Register Coordinator

organization Landmarks Preservation Commission date October, 1979

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

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 ☐ 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

Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

title

date

2/22/80

For HCRS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 5/19/80

Attest:

date 5/8/80

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 19 1980

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

Lescaze  
House

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The Howe-Lescaze partnership is best known for the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society (PSFS) Building in Philadelphia, built in 1929-32. This building was the second air-conditioned skyscraper in the United States and marked the first appearance on a monumental scale, of a design concept which was generally known as the "International Style." Architectural historian William Jordy has called this building, "the most important structure between Sullivan's work of the nineties and the Seagram Building at the end of the fifties."<sup>2</sup>

In Lescaze's own home, the clear, clean lines of the facade are a result of a precise balancing of solids and voids and an avoidance of non-functional detail. The organization of the exterior is a direct reflection of the interior plan and results from a functional separation of office, which is on the ground level, and residential space, on the three floors above.

The house incorporated some of the newest available technology including the first residential use of central air conditioning and an early use of glass bricks and blocks as structural material. Lescaze claimed (although it has not been substantiated) that this was the first such use of these materials in this country. He used a hollow glass block for the bedroom and living room areas, for the insulation from cold and heat, the privacy and the protection from dirt and noise which this material provided. Clear glass was used in the kitchen and in the rear of the house where privacy was not a factor. Solid glass brick was used where its strength was most necessary, for example as paving on the terrace, over the office space below.

The William Lescaze House and Office is a prototypic building which today, more than forty years after its construction, still retains its aesthetic, structural and humanistic validity.

<sup>2</sup>William Jordy, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, (May, 1962).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

FOR HCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 29 1980
DATE ENTERED	MAY 19 1980

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

William Lescaze  
House N.Y. County

CONTINUATION SHEET

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A more complete bibliography may be found in the New York City  
Landmarks Preservation Commission research file: Lescaze  
House.

Barbey, Gilles. "William Lescaze (1896-1969) Sa carrière et son  
oeuvre de 1915 à 1939," Werk 58, no. 8 (August, 1971), pp.  
559-63.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. Lescaze House Designation  
Report (LP-0898), by Ellen Kramer. New York: City of New  
York, 1967.

Lescaze, William. "These Documents Called Buildings,"  
The Intent of the Artist, ed. Augusto Centano. Princeton:  
Princeton University Press, 1941.



**20Q.10**

495 'Map No. 161'

Henry W. C.

100

EASTERN POST  
ROAD

E. 47TH

484

E. 4915

א. ח. ט. י.

100

'TURTLE BAY FARM'

*Reins of Francis Willoughby*

FEB 29 1980

MAY 19 1980



Property

Lescage House

80002698

State

NY - New York

Working Number

2-29-80 740

TECHNICAL

Photos

4

Maps

2

CONTROL

HISTORIAN

in 1933-34 the date

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Remodelled by and for architect, William Lescage, an influential exponent of the International Style and well-known for his partnership with George Howe which designed the PSFS building in Philadelphia (1929-32). It is exceptionally significant as the residence and office of a major American architect and, moreover, as a unique adaptation of the style, of which there are few examples in NY + NJ, to the urban streetscape. The remodeling was done at the very time when America's awareness of this new style was emerging. Under the influence of Bruno Taut and LeCorbusier's designs, Lescage incorporated smooth stucco walls, narrow mullioned glass blocks, and ribbon windows into a minimalist, functional design, in keeping with the tenets of the new style. Furthermore, the interior is light and airy, and curved walls and railings are subtly used, demonstrating the style's principles of open, flowing space. I recommend to accept, but I think two should condition how long. Lescage worked + lived here, and when he remodelled adjoining #209 (to determine whether or not these were covered as a unit).

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory \_\_\_\_\_

Review \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

BRANCH CHIEF

Accept 5/8/80

J. E. Towner

KEEPER

see phone rpt.

National Register Write-up \_\_\_\_\_

Send-back \_\_\_\_\_

Entered MAY 19 1980

Federal Register Entry

2.3.81

Re-submit \_\_\_\_\_



1. Lescaze House

211 East 48th Street

New York, N.Y. *County*

Photo by: Andrew Dolkart

Neg. at : New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Exterior, Front of house

11/79

*1/4*

FEB 29 1980

MAY 19 1980





2. Lescaze House

211 East 48th Street

New York, New York *County*

Photo by: Andrew Dolkart

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Rear of house

11/79

*2/4*

MAY 19 1980

FEB 29 1980





3 Lescaze House

211 East 48th Street

New York, N.Y. *County*

Photo by: Andrew Dolkart

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks

Preservation Commission

Third floor living room

11/79

*3/4*

FEB 29 1980

MAY 19 1980



4. Lescaze House

211 East 48th Street

New York, New York *County*

Photo by: Andrew Dolkart

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Entrance to architectural office

11/79

*4/4*

FEB 29 1980

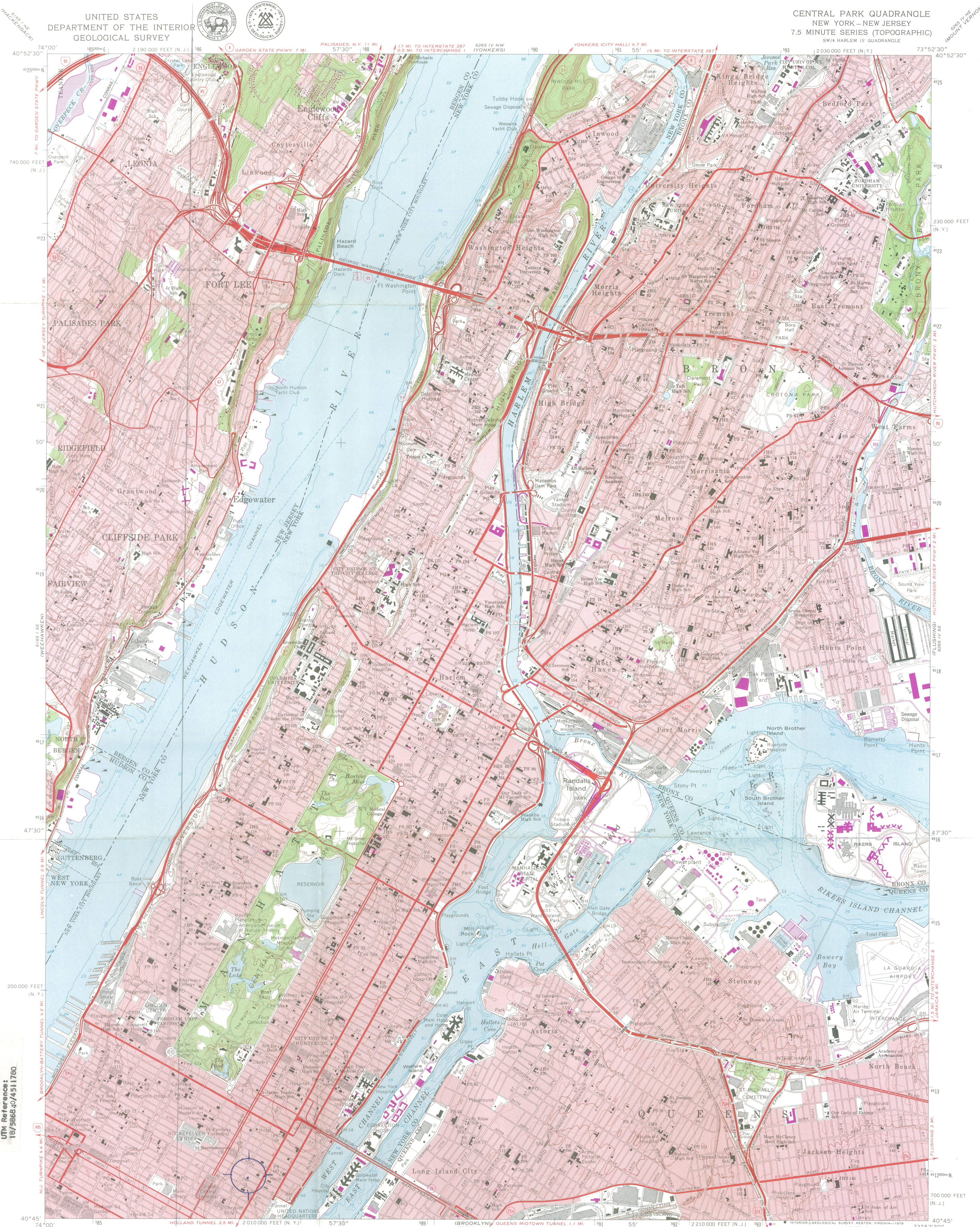
MAY 19 1980



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

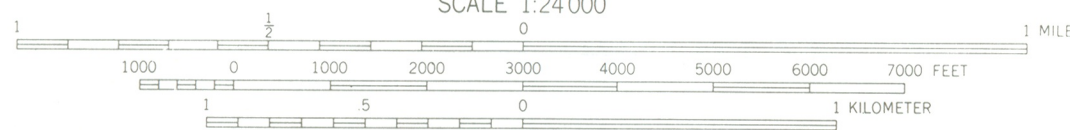


CENTRAL PARK QUADRANGLE  
NEW YORK—NEW JERSEY  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
SW/4 HARLEM 15' QUADRANGLE



LESCEZE HOUSE  
New York, New York  
UTM Reference:  
18/566040/4511780

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 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  
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

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs  
taken 1977 and other source data. This information  
not field checked. Map edited 1979

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map

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

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

1966  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
AMS 6265 IV SW—SERIES V821



MAY 19 1980



DATE

5/8/80

TELEPHONE REPORT

TIME OF CALL

AM  
PM

1. CALL ☒ TO; ☐ FROM (Name)

2. ADDRESS (Tel. No. if needed)

Joan Olshansky

NYCCLC

3. SUBJECT, PROJECT NO., ETC.

Rescaye House

4. DETAILS OF DISCUSSION

1) How long did Rescaye live there?  
Until he died in 1969.

2) When did he redo son's house next door?

Began work: Nov. 1941 → Apr. '42

for two families (openings adjoin  
basement & 3<sup>d</sup> floors)

oo NOT seen as one unit.

NAME OF PERSON PLACING/RECEIVING CALL

TITLE

OFFICE

Joe Town

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEW YORK

Date Entered MAY 19 1980

Name

Location

Barber-Mulligan Farm

Avon vicinity  
Livingston and Monroe  
Counties

Edgewater Village Hall and Tappen Park

Staten Island  
Richmond County

Lescaze House

New York  
New York County

Also Notified

Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan

Honorable Jacob K. Javits  
Honorable Barber B. Conable, Jr.  
Honorable John M. Murphy  
Honorable S. William Green

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

NR

Byers/bjr

6/2/80

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