

**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 HCERS use only

received FEB 29 1980

date entered MAY 6 1980

1. Name

historic Scribner Building

and/or common Old Scribner Building

2. Location

street & number 153-157 Fifth Avenue not for publication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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Religious

Organization
Offices

4. Owner of Property

name United Synagogue of America

street & number 3080 Broadway

city, town New York vicinity of state New York 10027

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

Landmarks Preservation Commission

title LP-0935

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate September, 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

The old Scribner Building is located on lower Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, in a busy commercial area filled with office buildings, lofts and storefronts. Constructed when this area was the home of more elegance than it presently sees, this building is nevertheless well adapted to serve its current occupants.

The facade of the Scribner Building demonstrates the principles of design that the architect, Ernest Flagg, had learned at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The ground floor serves as a base for the middle four stories, while the sixth story with mansard roof crowns the composition. Horizontally it is symmetrical about a central axis with a single bay on each side projecting slightly forward to frame the three middle bays. The building is constructed on a steel frame with a facade of Indiana limestone.

The ground floor, or base of the composition, is of rusticated limestone and has a wide storefront at the center--originally with glass marquee--which was modernized in 1969. Flanking it on either side is a single doorway which is topped by an entablature with cornice supported on brackets. Above each doorway is a small, square window. At the center of the plain frieze, two cherubs hold a garland that formerly enclosed the inscription, "Charles Scribner's Sons."

The middle four stories of the building have a tripartite vertical organization; the lowest of the four, like the base, is of rusticated limestone. The three middle windows are wider than the single windows at each side, and all are triply divided by slender colonnettes. In the next two stories, which are treated as a single unit, the windows have metal colonnettes and are separated vertically by metal balconies. These windows are separated horizontally by broad pilasters and are flanked by half-pilasters. They are set off from the level beneath them by a wide stone bandcourse which is decoratively pierced beneath the windows to form balustrades. The balustrade at the center projects forward slightly and is carried on console brackets with lions' heads, in elegant contrast to the rest of the building which projects forward only at the sides. Each side bay contains a single window at each floor, and those at the third floor are surmounted by entablatures with cornices carried on console brackets, reminiscent of the entrance doorways beneath them. An entablature with pellet-molding frieze crowns this middle portion of the building at the fourth floor. Above this level the tripartite windows are separated by slender stone colonnettes except for the single ones in the end bays; however, they are all treated uniformly being separated by broad pilasters. A bold cornice, carried on closely spaced console brackets, separates this fifth story band of windows from the sixth story mansard roof which crowns the structure.

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

Scribner Building

CONTINUATION SHEET N.Y. County

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

The sixth story actually begins with a low parapet that bears an inscription above each end bay: MDCCCXLVI at the left end, the date that Scribner & Baker was founded; and the right end, MDCCCXCIII, the date of the erection of the building. These dates are surmounted by curved broken pediments with cartouches filling the breaks. Behind the parapet rises the slate mansard roof. This roof is broken by skylight windows at either side that provide light to the sixth story and at the center by a stone dormer that rises above the parapet to which it is connected on either side by a handsome console. The dormer contains a triply-divided window with stone transom bar and mullions. A pilaster on either side of this window supports the entablature above it which, in turn, is crowned by a broken pediment containing an elaborate cartouche filling the break.

The ground floor store, originally the Scribner bookstore, is presently occupied by the showroom of a toy distributor. The bookstore was decorated with oak panelling, library tables and armchairs to resemble a library in an elegant home. The marble staircase at the back of the store with its iron railings in "C" and "S" scroll patterns is still in place. The stair leads to a mezzanine which lines the side and rear walls of the store. Concrete pillars and columns with Corinthian capitals still support the ceiling and link the railings of the mezzanine. The entrance area was modified in the 1940's or 50's when blond, half-height wooden walls topped with smoked glass were installed. Entrances to the offices on the floors above this are located in the projecting bays to each side of the modern glass storefront.

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 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 1893-94

Builder/Architect Ernest Flagg

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The old Scribner Building, constructed in 1893-94, is a fine example of the application of the best principles of French Beaux-Arts design to a relatively small commercial building.¹ Designed by the eminent American architect Ernest Flagg, this building served for many years as the corporate home of Charles Scribner's Sons, the noted publishing firm.

The firm was founded in 1846 as Scribner & Baker. Charles Scribner (1821-1871) was born in New York and graduated from the College of New Jersey (Princeton) in 1840. He studied law but decided that his weak health made him unsuited for that profession, so he joined Isaac Baker in starting a publishing house. The firm's original quarters were at the former building of the Old Brick Church on Park Row and Nassau Street. It soon distinguished itself as a leading publisher of books on theological and philosophical subjects, reflecting Scribner's devout Presbyterian background, but its financial success was assured by such early best sellers as J.T. Headley's Napoleon and his Marshals and Washington and his Generals (both 1847), Nathaniel P. Willis' People I Have Met (1850), and Marvel's Reveries of a Bachelor (1850) and Dream Life (1851). Baker died in 1850, and Scribner continued the business alone. In 1857 he purchased Bangs, Merwin & Co., a British book-importing company, and took on Charles Welford as a partner, organizing the firm of Scribner & Welford, importers. He also started a subscriptions department, which published the first American edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. In 1865, he expanded into magazine publishing with the first issue of Hours at Home, later Scribner's Monthly. At the time of his death in Lucerne, Switzerland, the New York Times commented: "As a publisher Mr. Scribner was noted for the sagacity, accuracy, quickness and soundness of his judgements. The breadth, liberality, and catholicity of his views, as well as the ripeness of his views, were admirably represented by the character and high standing of the publications that he issued....Of Mr. Scribner as a man it is almost impossible to speak in terms that shall not seem exaggerated to all but those who had the privilege of his personal acquaintance."

At Scribner's death, the firms' names were changed to Scribner, Armstrong & Co., publishers; and Scribner, Armstrong & Welford, book importers. Scribner's sons, John Blair and, after his graduation in 1875 from Princeton, Charles Scribner II, began to regain control of the companies from the various partners that their father had admitted over the years. In 1878 the brothers changed the name of the publishing house to Charles Scribner's Sons, which it retains today. In 1881 Scribner's Monthly was sold to the Century Company, and Scribner's agreed to stay out of the magazine business

¹The text of this report was taken almost in its entirety from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report,

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Brooklyn

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 18 585210 451102100
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

Manhattan tax map Block 850, Lot 4
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

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

Landmarks Preservation Commission
organization date October, 1979

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

New York
city or town 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

Stephen Mark

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

Bruce Lee Dwyer
Keeper of the National Register

date May 6, 1980

Attest: *Lynn A. Beebe*
Chief of Registration

date April 21, 1980

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED MAY 6 1980

Scribner Building

CONTINUATION SHEET N.Y. County ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

for at least five years. Thus it was not until 1887 that a new periodical, Scribner's Magazine, was launched. Charles Scribner II (1854-1930) distinguished himself as a leader of the movement for copy-right laws in the United States and as a founder of the American Publisher's Association; he also helped to organize the Princeton University Press in 1905. Among the many publications issued under his leadership were the American editions of Baedeker's Guides, the Dictionary of American Biography, as well as the work of such distinguished authors as Henry James, Edith Wharton, Brander Matthews, and George Santayana, and British authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson, George Meredith, and Rudyard Kipling.

In 1893 the company decided to move, and it purchased "all that certain parcel of land and premises now known as the Glenham Hotel," at 155 Fifth Avenue. Ernest Flagg, Charles Scribner's brother-in-law, was commissioned to prepare the plans for the new building.

Ernest Flagg (1857-1947) began his architectural career in the 1880s as a designer of apartment buildings, introducing the cooperative apartment and the duplex apartment to New York City. He was sent to Paris by his relative, Cornelius Vanderbilt II, to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from which he graduated in 1889. An early commission on his return from France was for the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. As a designer of commercial buildings, Flagg is best remembered for his work for the Singer Sewing Machine Company. When the Singer Building at Broadway and Liberty Street was completed in 1908, it was the tallest building in New York. A smaller building of 1903-04 by Flagg for the Singer Company at 561-563 Broadway is in the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District. In addition to two buildings for Charles Scribner's Sons on Fifth Avenue, Flagg also designed a residence for Charles Scribner at 9 East 66th Street. Although Flagg designed many splendid town houses for members of the New York upper class, he was a notable pioneer in the development of low cost housing for the poor in his designs for both fireproof workingmen's hotels and model tenements. Flagg's own house on Staten Island is a designated New York City Landmark.

By 1913, midtown was turning into the new fashionable commercial district, and Scribner's moved to its new building, also designed by Ernest Flagg, near the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and 48th Street. The family, nonetheless, retained the ownership of the downtown building until 1951. It was purchased in 1973 by the United Synagogue of America, a "Union of Conservative Congregations," organized in 1913 to

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED MAY 6 1980

Scribner Building

CONTINUATION SHEET N.Y. County ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

promote a middle path between Reform and Orthodox Judaism.

Although the building has a steel frame, Flagg was careful to maintain the illusion of masonry bearing-wall construction by visually lightening the facade as it rises. Therefore, the two bottom stories are rusticated, giving an impression of heaviness. The next two stories seem lighter, not only because of the smooth-faced stone, but also because of the double-height metal-framed windows at the center. The side windows, however, are set in masonry end bays. The fifth story seems even lighter because the windows are treated as a continuous horizontal band for the entire width of the building. The sixth story, except for the large dormer window at the center and the low parapet, has no masonry at all and consists of a high mansard roof. It is through this careful control of mass that Flagg has been able to lend a sense of organic unity to the building, even though the masonry facade does not directly reflect the steel frame of the building. The simplification of ornament anticipates in certain ways developments of the 20th century. The building demonstrates that Flagg had a firm grasp of the basic principles of Beaux-Arts design, an approach that was to characterize his work throughout his career.

Although Manhattan's fashionable commercial center moved further uptown, the Scribner Building remains as architectural evidence of a more elegant period in the history of this neighborhood. It is a fine example of the application of the best principles of French Beaux-Arts design to a relatively small commercial building.

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**

Scribner Building

CONTINUATION SHEET N.Y. County ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

"The History of a Publishing House," Scribner's Magazine, (December 1894).

Landmarks Preservation Commission. Scribner Building Designation Report (LP-0935). New York: City of New York, 1976.

MAY 6 1980 FEB 29 1980

SGARFIELD BR
CHASE MAN BK

urger Lib. 120 P. 129

[illegible]

A detailed street map of the Irving Trust Company building area in New York City. The map shows the intersection of 3rd Avenue and 42nd Street. The main building is labeled "SOHNER BLDG" and "IRVING TR. CO.". Other buildings shown include "LORDS" and "120". The map includes street names "3RD AVE" and "42ND ST", and a compass rose indicating North. The map is a black and white reproduction of a historical document.

100

38.3 38.3

E. 22ND 39.8 ST.

60 E. 21ST ST.

50 E. 20TH ST.

PART OF SECTION 3

SCALE: 120' TO AN INCH

A horizontal scale bar with markings at 0, 120, and 240 feet.

COPYRIGHT · SANBORN MAP COMPANY, INC

A R E

394

MADISON

50

343

Isaac Varian

Lib. 195 P. 388 Map No. 61

Property

Scribner Building

80002715

State

NY - New York

Working Number

2-29-80 711

TECHNICAL

CONTROL

Photos 2Maps 2

HISTORIAN

Example of late 19th c. design of a com-
paratively small-scale commercial row bldg. in the
Beaux Arts style. Associated w/ prominent architect Ernest
Flagg. Also associated w/ Scribner, a major 19th c. publishing
hse in NYC

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Accept
L. Beebe
4/21/80

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept
L. Beebe
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.  Scribner Building
153-57 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY *County*
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo, 1979
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

View toward east

1/2

FEB 29 1980

MAY 6 1980



2. [redacted] Scribner's Building

153-57 Fifth Avenue

New York, NY *County*

Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo 1979

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

Interior

2/2

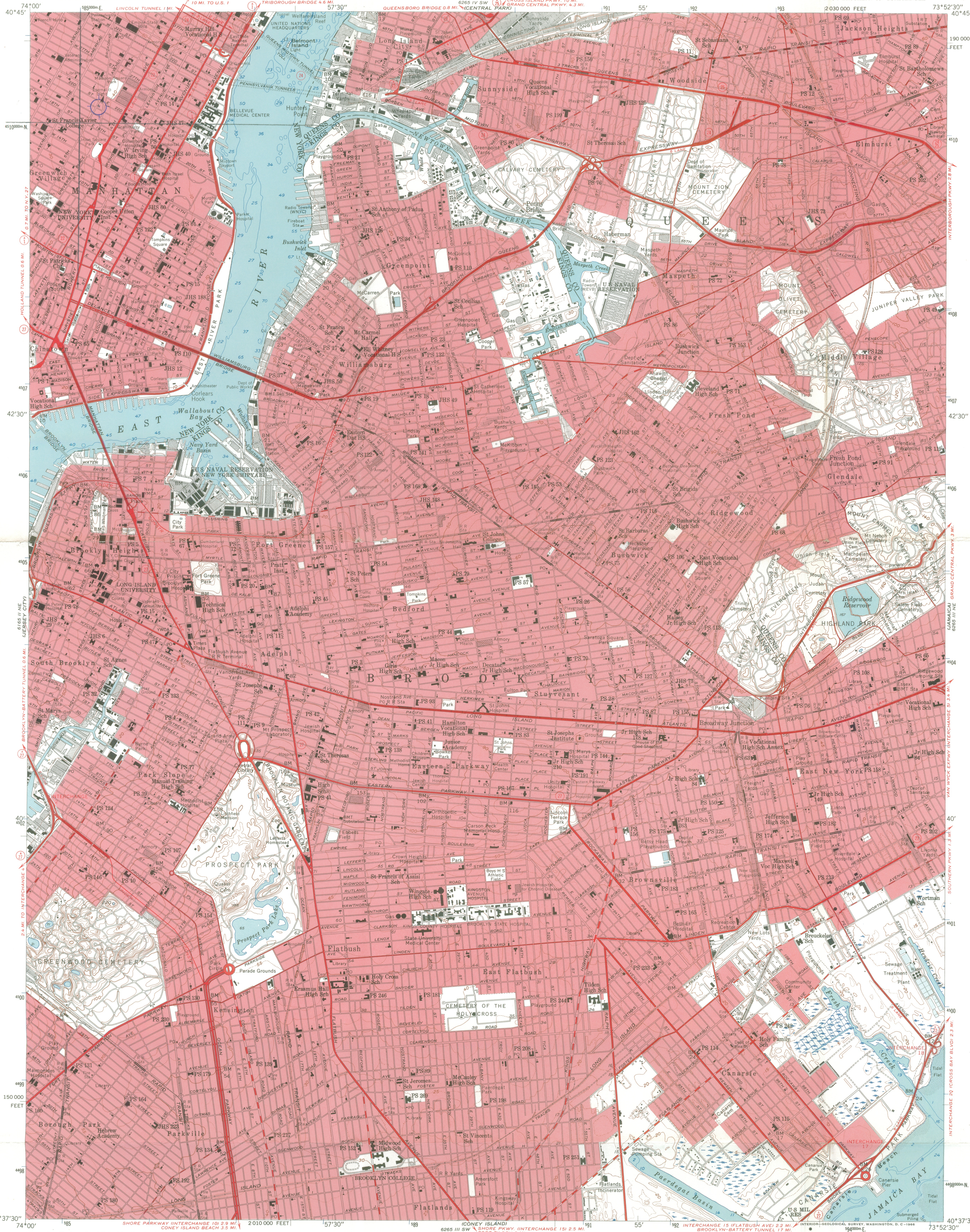
MAY 6 1980

FEB 29 1980

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Scribner Building
New York County, New York
UTM Reference:
18 / 585210 / 4510200

BROOKLYN QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NW/4 BROOKLYN 15' QUADRANGLE



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USC&GS, USCE, and City of New York Board of Estimate and Apportionment

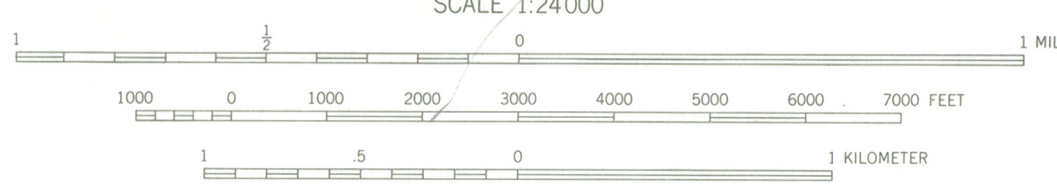
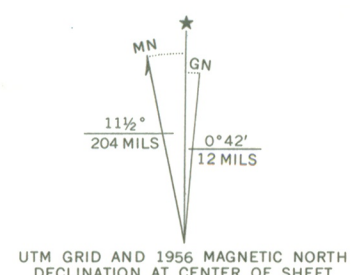
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs taken 1954, and from USC&GS charts T-5094, T-5335, T-5454, T-5459, T-5460, and T-8449
Topography by planetable surveys 1955-1956

Hydrography compiled from USC&GS charts 542 (1955) and 745 (1956)

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

Red tint indicates areas in which only
landmark buildings are shown

Entire area lies within New York City



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET

DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS

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 4.2 FEET IN THE EAST RIVER
AND 5.2 FEET IN JAMAICA BAY

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———

Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———

State Route ———



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

BROOKLYN, N.Y.

NW/4 BROOKLYN 15' QUADRANGLE

N4037.5-W7352.5/7.5

1956

AMS 6265 III NW-SERIES V821



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 Rhineland, 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.