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

1. Name

historic University Club

and/or common

2. Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>street &amp; number</th>
<th>1 West 54th Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>city, town</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>code</td>
<td>036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>county</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>code</td>
<td>061</td>
</tr>
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3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>district</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>X occupied</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>building(s)</td>
<td>private</td>
<td>unoccupied</td>
<td>commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>work in progress</td>
<td>educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>in process</td>
<td></td>
<td>industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X other: Club</td>
</tr>
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</table>

4. Owner of Property

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>University Club</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>street &amp; number</td>
<td>1 West 54th Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city, town</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Location of Legal Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.</th>
<th>New York Register's Office, Surrogate's Court Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>street &amp; number</td>
<td>31 Chambers Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city, town</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>title</th>
<th>Landmarks Preservation Commission, 305 Broadway</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>date</td>
<td>January 11, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has this property been determined elegible?</td>
<td>yes  x  no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depository for survey records</td>
<td>Landmarks Preservation Commission, 305 Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city, town</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The University Club occupies the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 54th Street in Manhattan. Attributed to Kendall and Moore (of the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White), the club was designed in 1897 under the supervision of Charles F. McKim.

The six-story University Club building, constructed of granite, closely resembles a sixteenth-century Italian Renaissance palazzo in plan and proportions but its exterior displays a combination of original architectural features. The handsome facade is divided into three main horizontal divisions separated by two strongly defined band courses. Each of the three divisions contains a row of large, arched windows. The first two divisions above street level have small, rectangular mezzanine windows above the arched windows, alternating with carved, marble shields. Each arched window has a large keystone block embellished with an heroic size head. On the Fifth Avenue side, attic windows are ingeniously worked into the frieze of the superb deep cornice crowning the building.

Among the conspicuous architectural features of the exterior are the elaborately ornate bronze railings of the six projecting balconies which are supported on large stone brackets. The dominant arched entrance doorway, on the Fifty-fourth Street side, is enframed by two handsome rusticated columns supporting a heavily ornamented lintel or entablature. Well-emphasized horizontal stone courses in continuous bands cover the surface of the building; the corners are slightly projected, rising the full height of the building, to create a feeling of enframement and strength in this truly imposing structure.

The decoration of the interior of the University Club is unequaled in the City of New York. The first and second floor halls are characterized by panelled walls with marble columns (Doric on the first floor; Ionic on the second) supporting projecting entablatures. The walls of the main floor hall are decorated with mosaics. A relief of the club's insignia, hanging over the fireplace, was designed by Kenyon Cox and executed by Charles Keck. The main dining room is articulated into rhythmic bays by engaged Ionic columns and pilasters, and each bay is filled with richly carved paneling accentuated by each university's crest. The ornate coffered ceiling is also of wood. The lounging room's ceiling is very similar to that of the dining room, while its walls are simpler: blank walls are separated into bays by ornate Corinthian pilasters. The doorways are enframed by a sumptuously carved, arched surround which rises the full height of the room. The library is by far the most elaborately decorated room. The ribs of the cross-vaulted ceiling are delicately carved in wood. Ceiling paintings by H. Siddons Mowbray (1904), which are based in style and color on those by Pintaricchio in the Borgia Apartments in the Vatican, fill every wall surface. Other public rooms, such as the magazine room and the council room, are also notable for their fine detailing, which is distinct and yet equal to that found in any other chamber of the club.

Very little remodeling has since taken place, save the addition of the 1916-20 wing (52 x 100 feet) on the northwest corner of the building, also designed by McKim, Mead & White, and included in this nomination.
8. Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
<th>Specific dates</th>
<th>Builder/Architect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_</td>
<td></td>
<td>_</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The University Club, a superb example of the work of the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, was designed as a monumental Italian Renaissance palazzo. Occupying a conspicuous site on Fifth Avenue, the building achieves an excellence in its proportions and details rarely surpassed in this country. A building of this type will probably never again be built in the United States.

Called "one of the great buildings of the city," 1 the University Club was designed in 1897 according to the principles taught at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris where the partners of the firm had studied. Among its outstanding features on the exterior are the bronze railings decorating the six balconies, and the deep terra-cotta cornice crowning the building. A most impressive feature is the arched entrance framed by rusticated columns which dominates the Fifty-fourth Street side. This grandiose exterior and the more refined elements of the interior illustrate the masterful skill of the architects in creatively synthesizing Italian Renaissance forms to produce an outstanding original design.

The prestigious architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White was chosen to design the clubhouse. Appropriately, the architects looked to the Italian Renaissance for inspiration, which to them meant the High Renaissance, not the Baroque exuberance of classical motifs then current. Earlier examples of the firm's interest in this style were the impressive group of the Villard Houses on Madison Avenue (1882), and the Boston Public Library (1887). The University Club remains to this day one of the most well-known McKim, Mead & White buildings.

Early in 1864, a group of men who had been intimate friends in college discussed the idea of founding a University Club. They had previously met on Saturday evenings for three years as an organization known as the Red Room Club. The following year, a Charter, "for the purpose of the promotion of literature and art, by establishing and maintaining a library, reading-room and gallery of art, and by such other means as shall be expedient and proper for such purpose," 2 was granted by the legislature on April 28, 1865. They originated something that was new in the club life of New York, a club that required an intellectual and cultural background for membership and a college degree. For fifteen years, prior to occupying their present home in 1899, the club had its headquarters in the Jerome Mansion, at the southeast corner of Twenty-sixth Street and Madison Avenue on Madison Square.


9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name: Central Park

UTM References

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
A 18 58 64 3 0 4 5 12 5 20
C
E
G

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property occupies Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1270, Lot 34 and is roughly 175' x 100.5' in size (with a 52' x 100.5' addition).

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Holly Huckins, Research Consultant

name/title: For Joan Olshansky, National Register Coordinator,

Landmarks Preservation Commission

organization

date: September, 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

date

title

For HCRS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration


Very fine, intact, sophisticated rendition of the Renaissance style — an example of type of the Century Renaissance Revival designed by the prominent firm of McKim, Mead & White. Associated since construction with the University Club, a mid 19th c. club founded for the promotion of literature & art.

Architectural Historian

Access:

4/14/80

Archeologist

Other

HAER

Inventory

Review

Review Unit Chief

Access:

4/14/80

Branch Chief

Keeper

National Register Write-up

Send-back

Re-submit

Entered APR 16 1980

United States Department of the Interior - Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
1. UNIVERSITY CLUB
Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street
New York, N.Y. County
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo, 1979
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
View of exterior looking northwest.

APR 16 1980

1078

FEB 29 1980
2. UNIVERSITY CLUB
Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street
New York, N.Y.
Photo by: Stephen L. Sneigo, 1979
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
View of Fifty-fourth Street entrance.

APR 16 1980

FEB 29 1980

2078
3. UNIVERSITY CLUB
Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street
New York, N.Y.

County

Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Detail of columns at entrance.

APR 16 1980

3078

FEB 29 1980
4. UNIVERSITY CLUB
Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street
New York, New York County
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Interior. Reading Room.

APR 16 1980
FEB 29 1980
5. UNIVERSITY CLUB
Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street
New York, New York County
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo 1979
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Interior. Ceiling of Council Room.
6. UNIVERSITY CLUB
Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street
New York, New York County
Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo 1979
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Interior: Library.

APR 16 1980

FEB 29 1980
UNIVERSITY CLUB
Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street
New York, New York County

Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

View of interior: library, 1900.

708
UNIVERSITY CLUB
Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street
New York, New York

Photo by: Stephen L. Senigo
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
View of interior; Lounging Room, 1900.
As taken from Leland Roth's Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White, 1875-1915 (New York; Benjamin Blom, 1973).
## ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

### STATE  NEW YORK

**Date Entered**  APR 16 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onderdonk, Horatio Gates, House</td>
<td>Manhasset, Nassau County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Reformed Church</td>
<td>New York, Queens County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kings County Savings Bank</td>
<td>Brooklyn, Kings County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Transfiguration</td>
<td>Brooklyn, Kings County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariner's Temple</td>
<td>New York, New York County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church of the Transfiguration</td>
<td>New York, New York County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bartholomew's Church and Community House</td>
<td>New York, New York County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Club</td>
<td>New York, New York County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Also Notified

- Honorable Jacob K. Javits
- Honorable Lester L. Wolff
- Honorable Joseph P. Addabbo
- Honorable Frederick W. Richmond
- 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

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.
### ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**STATE** NEW YORK  
**Date Entered** APR 16 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claremont Stable (Claremont Riding Academy)</td>
<td>New York New York County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harlem Courthouse</td>
<td>New York New York County</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Ann's Church Complex</td>
<td>Bronx Bronx County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llenroc</td>
<td>Ithaca Tompkins County</td>
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<td>Masterton-Dusenberry House</td>
<td>Bronxville Westchester County</td>
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<td>White Plains Armory</td>
<td>White Plains Westchester County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ingleside</td>
<td>Alexandria Bay Jefferson County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey-Davey Farm</td>
<td>Skaneateles Onondaga County</td>
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**Also Notified**

- Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan  
- Honorable Robert Garcia  
- Honorable Matthew F. McHugh  
- Honorable Peter A. Peyser  
- Honorable Richard L. Ottinger  
- Honorable Robert C. McEwen  
- Honorable Gary A. Lee  

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

Byers/bjr 4/22/80  
For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.