

**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 AUG 12 1983  
date entered

**1. Name**

historic

and/or common Houses at 647, 651-53 Fifth Avenue and 4 East 52nd Street

**2. Location**

street & number 647, Fifth Avenue  
651-53 Fifth Avenue and 4 East 52nd Street not for publication

city, town New York vicinity of congressional district

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Equitable Life Assurance Society: Arvic Realty (for all properties)

street & number 888 Seventh Avenue

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 10007

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Landmarks Designation Reports  
title (LP-0271), (LP-0954) has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date July 14, 1970; March 22, 1977 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmarks Preservation Commission

city, 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 NA

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The three buildings at 647, 651-53 Fifth Avenue and 4 East 52nd Street were originally constructed as private residences but have been converted to commercial use in keeping with the evolution of this section of Fifth Avenue. Today, this section of Fifth Avenue is characterized by fashionable shops, department stores, offices and apartment buildings. Olympic Tower, a modern high-rise building, occupies the rest of the block facing Fifth Avenue.

No. 647 is designed in the French neo-Renaissance style and is faced in marble. It is three bays wide and five stories in height. The first story was originally treated as an English basement with round arched windows, rusticated facing with vermiculation, and heavy paired consoles supporting a second story balcony. The first story windows were enlarged in 1917 when the building was adapted to commercial use. Today a plate glass display window has been substituted. Enframed by rusticated stone, it is almost identical with the first story of No. 651-53. A second story wrought-iron balcony runs below a composite order of fluted pilasters which links the second and third stories and is crowned by a simple entablature. An unusual feature of the facade is the termination of the range of pilasters at the north side. A broad, smooth pier, cutting off all but a narrow slice of fluted pilaster, expresses the thickness of the wall. The windows, set between the pilasters, have splayed lintels with keystones at both floors. The top two stories above the entablature are the result of a late 1930s alteration which increased the height of the building by one story. The original stone rosettes remain in place at the fourth story and the windows installed at the fourth and fifth stories resemble the originals. Stone panels above the rosettes visually unite the two stories. A simple denticulated roof cornice replaces the original, but the original stone balustrade has been retained and simply moved up a story. No. 647 was constructed as one of an identical pair of houses with neighboring No. 645 to the south, which has been replaced by a three-story annex to Olympic Tower.

No. 651-53 is designed in the neo-Italian Renaissance style and is oriented with its main facade on the side street (East 52nd), a typical arrangement for corner site Manhattan town houses. The first story of the limestone-faced building has smooth rustication and large plate glass display windows installed as part of the 1917 alteration to commercial use. On East 52nd Street a central three-bay-wide pavilion projects slightly and is surmounted by a pediment at the fourth story level. This richly carved pediment is visually supported by four fluted pilasters with Scamozzi capitals, which rise from the second story above a heavy stone balcony on consoles. These elements form a "temple front" which dominates the facade. Paired windows at the second story flank the central pavilion and are enframed by engaged columns supporting broad lintels with denticulated cornices. At the third story the windows have similar cornices, supported on scroll brackets. The fourth story has smaller, more simply detailed windows, while the fifth story contains small square windows punctuating an extremely rich frieze of acanthus foliage, which encircles the building. Above is a projecting cornice carried on brackets and surmounted by a balustrade. The Fifth Avenue facade has an iron balcony on consoles at the second story and windows of the same design as those of the 52nd Street elevation at the upper stories. An elaborately enframed clock appears above the central window at the second story.

No. 4 East 52nd Street is a smaller town house adjacent to No. 651-53 Fifth Avenue. It is neo-classical in style with a limestone facing and is five stories in height and three bays wide. The first two stories have been altered and contain broad plate glass windows and an iron marquee surmounted by a clock. At the third story the windows are simply enframed and have keystones. Above a bracketed cornice are three stone gables and a pitched roof with skylight.

## 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 checked="" 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** No. 647: 1902-05, alt. **Builder/Architect** No. 647: Hunt & Hunt, Charles Fraser,

1917, 1939

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

F. Verpilleux

No. 651-53: 1903-05, alt. 1917

No. 651-53: Robert W. Gibson, William Welles Bosworth

No. 4: 1904-05, alt. 1929

No. 4: C.P.H. Gilbert, Pearsell & Mills

The three buildings at 647, 651-53 Fifth Avenue and 4 East 52nd Street are architecturally significant as rare surviving examples of the opulent Beaux-Arts style residences that once dominated this section of Fifth Avenue. Constructed between 1902-1905, they are also significant for their association with Manhattan's wealthiest and most prominent families and for their designs by three of the leading architects of their day: Hunt and Hunt, Robert W. Gibson and C.P.H. Gilbert. The survival of these buildings is attributed to their early, sensitive conversions to commercial uses. Today they serve as a reminder of the splendid turn-of-the-century residential character of this neighborhood and of its transition to elegant commercial use following World War I.

In the later nineteenth century the Vanderbilts began to erect a series of grand houses along Fifth Avenue. They are said to have spent millions of dollars in purchasing land along Fifth Avenue to protect their domain from commercial encroachment. Their houses on the avenue included a Francois I style mansion for W.K. Vanderbilt by R.M. Hunt, another Francois I style mansion for his brother Cornelius by George B. Post, and twin brownstone mansions for the father William H. and his daughters by John B. Snook and the Herter Brothers, originally called the "Twin Houses" but soon known as the "Twin Horrors." The building at 647 Fifth Avenue is the sole surviving house in Manhattan of the numerous Vanderbilt family mansions which once lined Fifth Avenue just south of Central Park.

George W. Vanderbilt bought the lots at Nos. 645 and 647 Fifth Avenue across from his father's house to prevent an office building from being erected there. In 1902, he commissioned the firm of Hunt & Hunt to build two identical buildings, the Marble Twins, on this land. No. 645 was occupied by George's sister Emily and her husband and No. 647 was for William K., although the first and only occupant of the house as a residence was Robert Goelet, a Vanderbilt relation by marriage, as well as a member of a prominent old New York family. By hiring the firm of Hunt & Hunt, sons of Richard Morris Hunt, George was continuing a longstanding relationship between the Vanderbilts as patrons and the Hunts as architects.

No. 647, executed in the style of Louis XV, is a good example of a Beaux-Arts town-house that was converted to commercial usage at an early date. In 1917 the building became the offices and gallery of Gimpel & Wildenstein, one of the world's foremost art dealers (today, Wildenstein & Co.). Charles Fraser carried out the initial alterations to No. 647, which was further altered by F. Verpilleux. The new shop windows, enframed by rusticated stone and fluted pilasters, are not obtrusive. The additional floor harmonized extremely well with the original fourth story treatment, while the original balustrade was moved up a story and still caps the facade. Not only are there changes sympathetic to the Hunt & Hunt design but they also accord with Bosworth's alterations for Cartier at 651-53 Fifth Avenue.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Retrospective-Louis Cartier, 101 Years of the Jewelers Art, Cartier, New York., 1976.  
Hamlin, T.F. The American Spirit in Architecture (The Pageant of America), Vol. XIII, 1926.  
Landmarks Preservation Commission. "Architects' Appendix." Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report. (LP-1051) New York, May 19, 1981.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Central Park, NY-NJ

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

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5	8	6	3	9	0
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4	5	1	2	3	5	0
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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

The properties are adjacent to one another and occupy Manhattan Tax Map Block 1287, Lots 71 and 69 as outlined on the attached map with a scale of 120 feet to one inch.

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

state	code	county	code
			NA

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

Contact:

name/title Austin O'Brien, Program Analyst

organization Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau date September, 1982

street & number Agency I, E.S.P.

telephone (518) 474-0479

city or town Albany

state New York 12238

## 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

title Commissioner

date

For HCRS use only

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

for Melores Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



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

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

Houses at 647, 651-53 Fifth Avenue and 4 East 52nd Street  
Continuation sheet New York County, NY Item number 8

For HCERS use only

received

date entered

Page 2

The building at 651-53 Fifth Avenue was completed in 1905 for Connecticut millionaire Morton F. Plant. Plant had made his fortune in trolley lines and railroads, putting together the Plant system of railroads which became the Atlantic Coast Line. He was vice president of the Plant Investment Company and owned all or shares of several baseball clubs. When he bought this corner property from the Vanderbilts, he commissioned his new residence from architect Robert W. Gibson. Of British birth and training, Gibson came to this country in 1880 and worked for eight years in Albany, New York, before moving to New York City in 1888. The architect of numerous important churches in the city, Gibson was enthusiastically accepted into New York social circles, which undoubtedly helped him in obtaining the Plant commission.

In 1917, 651-653 Fifth Avenue was leased and later sold to Cartier Inc. Cartier was founded in Paris in 1847 and opened its New York store in 1908. The Cartier family numbered among their clients European royalty and American millionaires. They designed not only fine jewelry but also clocks and watches. Louis Cartier (1875-1942) created the first wristwatch--the "Santos," named for aviator Santos Dumont, in 1907. The firm today continues the fine traditions of the Cartier family.

This five-story neo-Italian Renaissance building is a handsome example of the successful conversion of a former Fifth Avenue townhouse into a distinguished commercial establishment. The Fifty Second Street elevation is especially impressive. Dominating the facade is a handsome decorative architectural feature composed of an ornately carved balcony, supported by heavy console brackets at the second floor with four fluted Doric pilasters rising two stories above the balcony and supporting the handsome low pitched pediment. The framing around the windows is especially commendable, particularly the second floor windows which are flanked by columns resting on a low balustraded wall. The fifth floor attic windows are ingeniously set in the profusely decorated frieze just below the rich cornice and the building is crowned by a balustrade at the roof line.

W.W. Bosworth (1869-1966), a Beaux-Arts trained architect, altered No. 651-53 with restraint and with sensitivity to the original design. The shop windows which replace the original ones are in keeping with the style of the house, as are the doorway and the signs.

Facing 52nd Street and adjacent to the Plant mansion, another elegant residence was built in 1904-05. C.P.H. Gilbert designed the building at 4 East 52nd Street for Edward Holbrook. While little is known of Holbrook except for his obvious financial success, Gilbert was the architect for numerous opulent residences for leading New York families. Having studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Gilbert had a good command of historical detail with which he created imaginative compositions in a variety of styles, depending on the taste of the particular client.

No. 4 East 52nd Street is a small neo-classical townhouse that was joined to No. 651-53 in an expansion move by Cartier in the 1920s. Pearsall & Mills executed the alterations to No. 4 and continued the high standards of the architects who altered the two large houses. The Cartier clock is stylistically in keeping with Gilbert design and at the same time reflects the commercial use of the building in a restrained manner.

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Inventory—Nomination Form**

Houses at 647, 651-53 Fifth Avenue and 4 East 52nd Street  
**Continuation sheet** New York County, NY **Item number** 8

For HCERS use only  
received  
date entered

**Page** 3

These distinguished buildings are architecturally significant as rare surviving examples of the elaborate Beaux-Arts style residences that once dominated this section of Fifth Avenue. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, New York's wealthiest and most powerful families, including the Astors, Belmonts, Goulds, Goelets, and Vanderbilts, built lavish residences along this street. By the end of World War I, rising taxes and maintenance costs, as well as a lack of servants, caused these homes to be given up in favor of smaller residences further removed from the bustle of midtown business. While the vast majority of these elaborate buildings were replaced by high-rise offices, these three Beaux-Arts structures have survived essentially intact. Sensitive changes to these three buildings have contributed to their present usefulness while retaining the elegance and the sense of history that these former townhouses express. They are a reminder of the splendid turn-of-the-century residential character of this neighborhood and its transition to elegant commercial use following World War I.

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

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



Houses at 647, 651-53 Fifth Avenue  
and 4 East 52nd Street  
New York County, New York

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Continuation sheet

Item number

11

Page 2

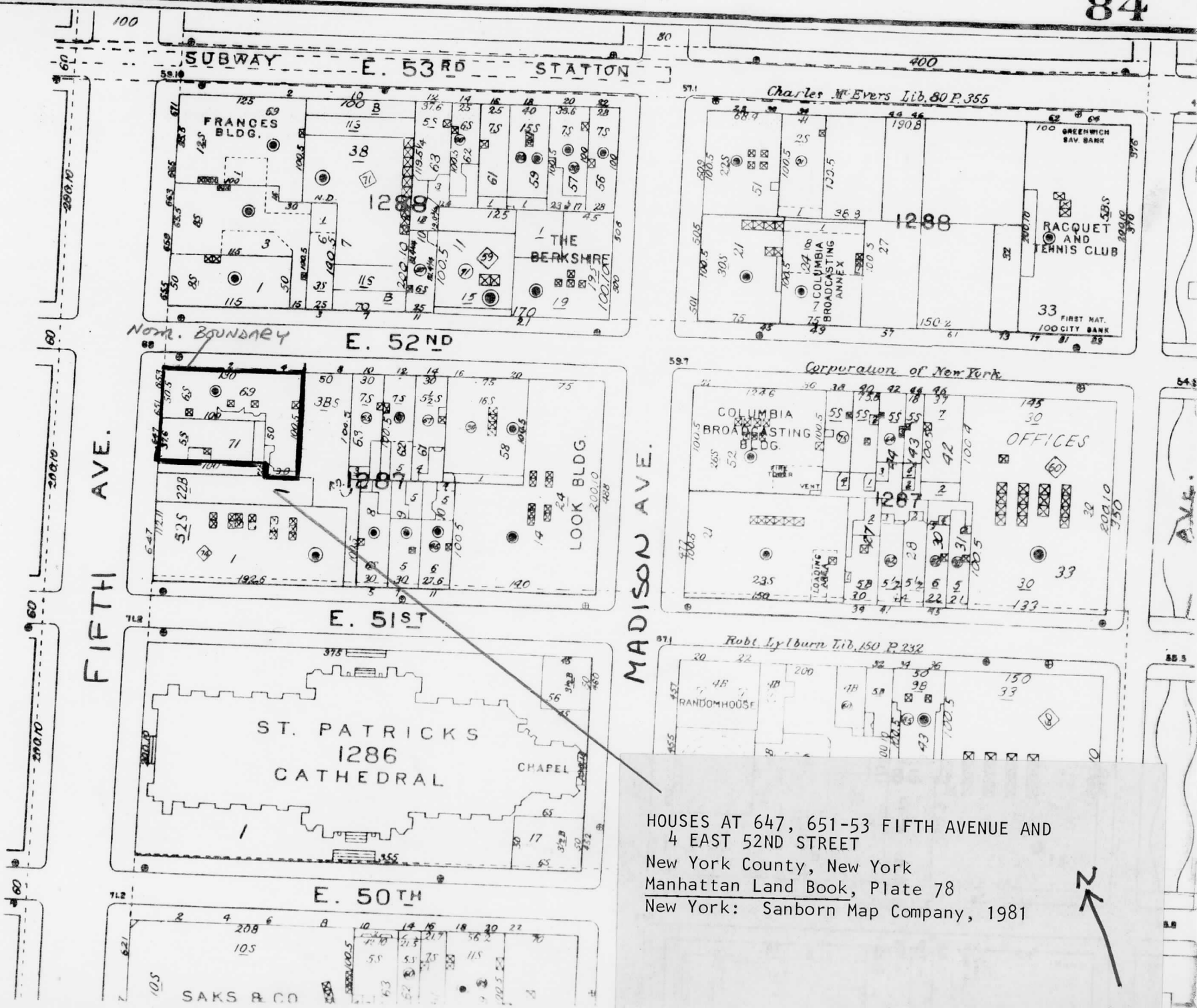
FORM RESEARCHED AND PREPARED BY:

Nancy Goeschel  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
20 Vesey Street  
New York, New York

(212)566-7577



77



HOUSES AT 647, 651-53 FIFTH AVENUE AND  
4 EAST 52ND STREET  
New York County, New York  
Manhattan Land Book, Plate 78  
New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1981



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Houses at 647, 651—53 Fifth Avenue and 4 East  
52nd Street  
New York County  
NEW YORK

Working No. AUG 12 1983  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84  
Date Due: 9/8/83 9/26/83  
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 9/8/83  
☐ RETURN  
☐ REJECT  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ resubmission  
☐ nomination by person or local government  
☐ owner objection  
☐ appeal

Entered in the \_\_\_\_\_  
National Register \_\_\_\_\_

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	
	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ alterations/integrity  
☐ dates  
☐ boundary selection

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## 8. Significance

Period      Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

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## 13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet*





1.

HOUSES AT 647, 651-53 FIFTH AVENUE AND  
4 EAST 52ND STREET: 647 Fifth Avenue  
New York County, New York

Photo: 1979

Neg. at: New York Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

View from the west





2. HOUSES AT 647, 651-53 FIFTH AVENUE AND  
4 EAST 52ND STREET: 651-53 Fifth Avenue  
New York County, New York

Photo: 1979  
Neg. at: New York Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

View from the northwest



3.

HOUSES AT 647, 651-53 FIFTH AVENUE AND  
4 EAST 52ND STREET: 4 East 52nd St.  
New York County, New York

Photo: 1979  
Neg. at: New York Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

View from the north

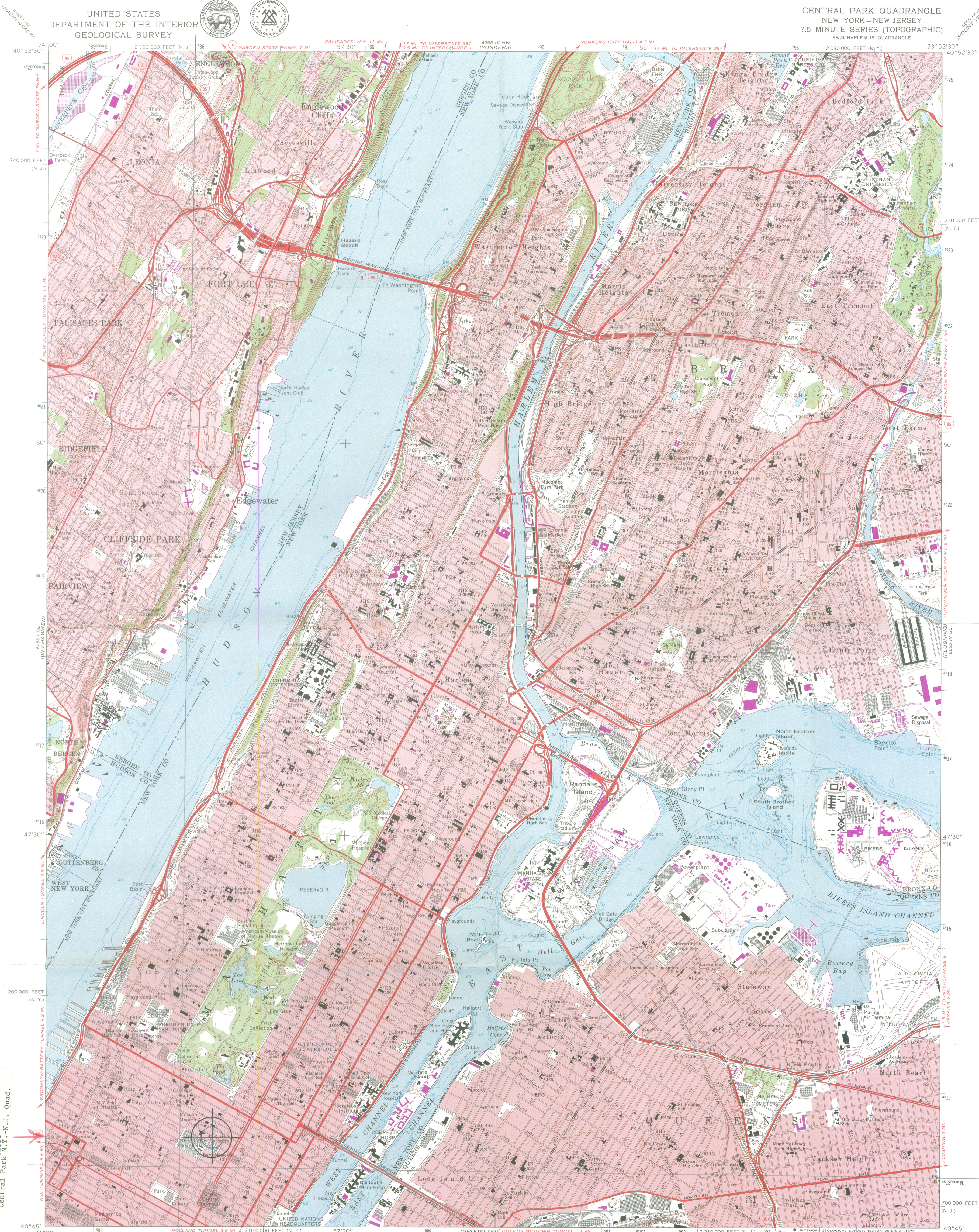


UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



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

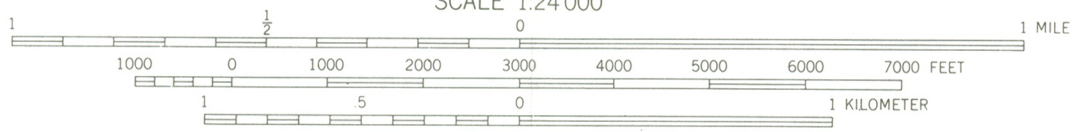
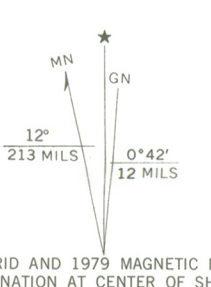
6065 IV NW  
(MOUNT VERNON)



Houses at 647, 651-53 Fifth  
Avenue and 4 East 52nd Street  
New York County, New York  
UTM Reference:  
18 586390 4512350  
Central Park N.Y.—N.J. Quad.

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



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

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  
PHOTO-REVISED 1979  
AMS 6265 IV SW—SERIES V821

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