

United States Department of the Interior
National Park 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 NPS use only

received AUG 12 1983

date entered

1. Name

historic Lincoln Building

and/or common 1 Union Square West

2. Location

street & number 1 Union Square West not for publication

city, town New York vicinity of congressional district

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☒ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☒ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☐ museum
			☐ park
			☐ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Buchbinder & Warren

street & number 1 Union Square West

city, town New York vicinity of state N.Y.

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Surrogate's Court/Hall of Records

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York state N.Y.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title NONE has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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 Lincoln Building is a nine-story corner structure constructed of limestone, brick, terra cotta, and granite. It is located across the street from the southwest corner of Union Square and is in the midst of a busy mixed-use commercial, residential, and industrial district. The building is a Romanesque Revival style early skyscraper with a commercial ground floor and office space above. It is primarily divided into horizontal round-arched arcades separated by projecting bandcourses and cornices.

The Union Square elevation of the Lincoln Building is divided into four bays, while the facade facing East 14th Street is seven bays wide. The massing and ornamentation of the two facades is identical on all but the ground floor, except that the windows and arches on 14th Street are wider than those on Union Square. The commercial ground floor of the building is the only section that has been substantially altered. The main entrance to the offices is in the northernmost bay on the Union Square frontage. This entrance is composed of a massive round arch supported by columns and ornamented with a Norman zig-zag molding. The arch spandrels contain Byzantine carving; a frieze above the arch contains the name of the building. The columns and frieze have been covered with metal, and the carved winged monsters that sat above the frieze have been removed. The Union Square shop fronts consisted of a central entrance bay marked by cast-iron clustered colonnettes with Byzantine capitals. These colonnettes and the original security gate survive. The flanking windows, which projected from the line of the building, have been removed, as has a similar display window on the corner bay on 14th Street. The commercial bays on 14th Street are separated by rock-faced limestone piers resting on granite bases. Within each pier were slender stone colonnettes and iron shop fronts. The shop fronts were replaced many years ago, but the cast-iron horizontal support bars at the top of each bay survive, as do the colonnettes.¹ The final bay on this elevation contains a service entrance that retains its cast-iron frame ornamented with raised bosses.

The first three office stories (floors 2-4) are faced with smooth- and rock-faced limestone and they are separated from the upper stories by a dentil cornice that runs above the fourth floor. The second and third floor windows are set within a two-story arcade demarcated by smooth limestone piers with rock-faced stone arches. The pier capitals and arch spandrels and imposts are ornamented with Byzantine foliage, Celtic intertwining bands, bunches of grapes, Norman zig-zags, and human heads with grimacing and clowning expressions. On the second floor, set within each arch, are pairs of shoulder-arched windows separated by piers with Byzantine capitals. An ornamented zig-zag molding decorates the chamfered upper edge of each window enframingent. Panels outlined by small dentils separate the second floor windows from the round-arched third floor openings. A band of tiny dentils runs between the third and fourth floors. On the fourth floor are paired round-arched windows separated by short columns. The smooth limestone voussoirs and molded arch surrounds rest on highly decorated imposts. At the two Union Square corners are three-story colonnettes that rise from the base of the second floor and end in flaring foliate capitals that support bulbous cartouches surrounded by foliate decoration.

The simple brick and limestone fifth floor, with its paired rectangular windows separated by piers with Byzantine capitals, forms a transition between the arcades of the lower section and the arcades above. A modest projecting belt course with tiny dentils separates the fifth floor from the sixth floor.

(see continuation sheet)

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

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

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Continuation sheet Lincoln Building New York, N.Y. Item number 7

Page 2

The design of the sixth and seventh stories echoes that of the second and third, except that on the upper stories the building is faced with brick and smooth limestone and the architectural forms are lighter and more restrained. The sixth floor has shoulder-arched windows separated by piers and the seventh floor windows have round arches. These two floors are divided by recessed panels with terra-cotta egg-and-dart moldings. The raised moldings of the seventh floor arches rest on large faces, all with mugging expressions, and at the corner the moldings extend into rich Byzantine plaques. A compound dentil cornice runs above the seventh floor. At the corner this cornice is embellished with a flagpole base that takes the form of a monstrous griffin. The eighth floor, with its paired round-arched windows is faced with terra-cotta panels. Those of the upper half of the floor are cast in complex Byzantine and Celtic patterns. A heavy projecting cornice crowns this story. This cornice consists of compound dentil moldings, a band of bosses, an ovolo molding with vertical incising and bosses, and a row of brackets in the form of grimacing human and lion heads. The ninth floor, or attic level, is shorter than the floors below. It is designed in the form of a loggia with paired terra-cotta twisted columns separating the small rectangular windows. At the corner is a curvaceous metal band that was originally part of the flagpole frame. The attic is topped by an ovolo molding with recessed panels and incising.

As with most office buildings, the office space has been redesigned many times. The original cast- and wrought-iron stairway with its ornate curving railing survives, as does a portion of the original lobby with its Greek fret and anthemion entablature.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/ humanitarian
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ theater
☒ 1800–1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ transportation
☐ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ other (specify)
		☐ invention		

Specific dates 1887–88

Builder/Architect R.H. Robertson

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lincoln Building is an architecturally significant nine-story early skyscraper designed by R.H. Robertson, one of New York City's leading late nineteenth century architects. The office building, designed in 1887,¹ is an extremely fine example of a Romanesque Revival style skyscraper and illustrates an important early phase on the development of highrise architecture in New York City. It reflects the efforts of New York City's architects to adapt the most popular contemporary styles to the design of the highrise buildings that were just beginning to be erected. The Lincoln Building exhibits many decorative forms typical of the Romanesque Revival, but it is an early example of a Romanesque Revival style structure clad with white limestone as opposed to the more traditional earth-toned stones.

The Lincoln Building is located on a prominent corner facing historic Union Square. The area surrounding the square had initially developed in the 1830s and 1840s as a prosperous residential district. Following the Civil War, as commerce and industry moved north from lower Manhattan, the mansions that faced the square and the row houses the lined the side streets were replaced by commercial buildings or altered to business uses. In the late 1870s and 1880s steel technology and the perfection of the passenger elevator led to the construction of taller and taller office towers. The Lincoln Building is among the finest early skyscrapers and its architect was among the New York City architects who pioneered in the design of these new tall buildings.

Robert Henderson Robertson (1849–1919) had a long and successful career that spanned a period of great stylistic ferment. Born in Philadelphia and a graduate of Rutgers College, Robertson's earliest architectural training was in the Philadelphia office of Henry Sims, a designer of country houses and Gothic churches. In about 1870 Robertson briefly worked in the New York office of George B. Post before opening his own office. In 1874 and 1875 Robertson formed a partnership with William Potter, an architect with similar design sensibilities. The Potter & Robertson firm was active until 1880. Working independently during the 1880s, Robertson's designs show the influence of the Romanesque Revival style popularized by Henry Hobson Richardson. Robertson's Romanesque Revival style buildings owe their inspiration to Richardson, but his works freely interpret the style, creating buildings of great individuality. During the 1880s Robertson was a leading architect of ecclesiastical and institutional buildings. Among his extant Romanesque Revival works in these fields are St. Luke's Episcopal Church (1892) on Convent Avenue and West 141st Street in the Hamilton Heights Historic District and the former YWCA (1883) around the corner from the Lincoln Building, at 7 East 15th Street. In the mid 1880s Robertson became active in the design of office buildings. His earliest skyscrapers, such as the Lincoln Building, have masonry bearing walls and steel framing, but by the early 1890s he was designing buildings with steel skeleton frames. The Lincoln Building may be Robertson's earliest skyscraper; it was soon followed by the nearby McIntyre Building (1890) at the corner of Broadway and East 18th Street, the Corn Exchange Bank (1892) at Beaver and William Streets, and the American Tract Society (1894) on Nassau Street.

(see continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

"The Havemeyer Building-A Type," Real Estate Record and Builders Guide 51(April 29, 1893): 654-658.
A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City During the Last Quarter of a Century. New York: Real Estate Record Association, 1898. (see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Brooklyn, NY

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8
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5	8	5	0	9	0
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4	5	0	9	6	8	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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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached map

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

state	code	county	code
NA			

state	code	county	code
NA			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Contact: Larry E. Gobrecht

organization New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation date July 1983

street & number Empire State Plaza, Agency Bldg. 1 telephone (518) 474-0479

city or town Albany state N.Y.

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Commissioner date 8/10/83

For NPS use only

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

[Signature] Entered in the National Register date 9/8/83
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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date entered

Continuation sheet Lincoln Building New York, NY Item number 8 Page 2

Robertson's work during the 1890s continued to follow popular stylistic trends and his designs were influenced by Renaissance and Classical architecture. The most famous building from this period is the twenty-seven-story Park Row Building (1895-99) at 15 Park Row near City Hall, once the tallest building in the world.

The Lincoln Building's massing and ornamentation are purely Romanesque Revival in style and its design exemplifies the efforts of architects in New York City to adapt the prominent contemporary styles used for residential, ecclesiastical, institutional, and smaller commercial buildings to the new skyscrapers. Unlike in Chicago where architects attempted to design skyscrapers in a new style, New York architects designed skyscrapers in the more traditional Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Classical, and Neo-Gothic styles during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

The facades of the Lincoln Building display the rich textural contrasts typical of the Romanesque Revival. The juxtaposition of rock- and smooth-faced limestone, brick, granite, and terra cotta produced sophisticated textural variations. Other Romanesque Revival motifs include the massive stone arches, heavy piers and columns, complex Byzantine and Celtic style carving, Norman zig-zag moldings, a flagpole base in the form of a monstrous griffin, and the use of human and animal heads with comic, grimacing, and jesting faces.

A new and progressive feature of the building is the use of white limestone facing rather than the dark, earth-tone stone more commonly used on Romanesque Revival style works. This lightened palette is a reflection of the slowly increasing influence of Classicism on American architects at the end of the nineteenth century. It also shows Robertson's close connection with the work of Henry Hobson Richardson, since the Lincoln Building was designed shortly after Richardson had first used light-colored stone on such buildings as the Alleghany County Courthouse (1884), Pittsburgh and the Franklin MacVeagh House (1885, demolished), Chicago.

The massing of the Lincoln Building does not exhibit the tripartite composition of the skyscrapers erected in the 1890s when the base/shaft/capital format, modeled after the form of a Classical column, was perfected.² Rather, the design of the Lincoln Building shows an architect adapting a traditional style to a new building type. The building is massed horizontally. This is appropriate for a Romanesque Revival structure since the style gains its excitement, in part, from the use of heavy, earth-bound forms. The Lincoln Building has a clearly defined base and capital; the central floors, however, are divided into several horizontal arcades with those on the top echoing those below. The design is cohesive, giving the building a unified appearance that exemplifies the talents of its architect.

Footnotes

¹In his article, "The Works of R.H. Robertson," Architectural Record 6 (October-December 1896: 214, Montgomery Schuyler incorrectly dates the building to 1885. This date is repeated in A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City During the Last Quarter of a Century. New York: Real Estate Record Association, 1898., p.69. New York City Building's Department records clearly show that the building was begun in 1887.

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

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

For HCRS use only

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Continuation sheet Lincoln Building New York, NY Item number

8

Page 3

²The earliest use of the base/shaft/capital format in New York City seems to have been George B. Post's Union Trust Building of 1889-90. See, "A New View of Skyscraper History," by Winston Weisman in The Rise of an American Architecture, ed. by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. New York: Praeger, 1970.

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

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

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Continuation sheet Lincoln Building New York NY Item number 9 Page 2

Schuyler, Montgomery. "The Works of R.H. Robertson." Architectural Record 6(October-December 1896): 184-219.

Weisman, Winston. "A New View of Skyscraper History,": in The Rise of an American Architecture, ed. by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. New York: Praeger, 1970, pp. 115-160.

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National Park Service**

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date entered

Continuation sheet Lincoln Building, New York, Item number 11 Page 2
New York Co., NY

Draft nomination and research prepared by: Andrew S. Dolkart
201 West 92nd Street - 3F
New York, New York
(212) 877-2088

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Lincoln Building
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

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ excellent | ☐ deteriorated |
| ☐ good | ☐ ruins |
| ☐ fair | ☐ unexposed |

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

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

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. The Lincoln Building
One Union Square West
New York, N.Y. 10003

photo by: Alex Herrera, 1983
neg. at : Buchbinder/ Warren Realty
One Union Square West
New York, N.Y. 10003

View South and West



2. The Lincoln Building
One Union Square West
New York, N.Y. 10003

photo by: Alex Herrera, 1983
Neg. at : Buchbinder/Warren Realty
One Union Square West
New York, N.Y. 10003

View south



3. The Lincoln Building
One Union Square West
New York, N.Y. 10003

photo by: Alex Herrera, 1983
neg. at : Buchbinder/Warren Realty
One Union Square West
New York, New York 10003

principal stairway



4. The Lincoln Building
One Union Square West
New York, N.Y. 10003

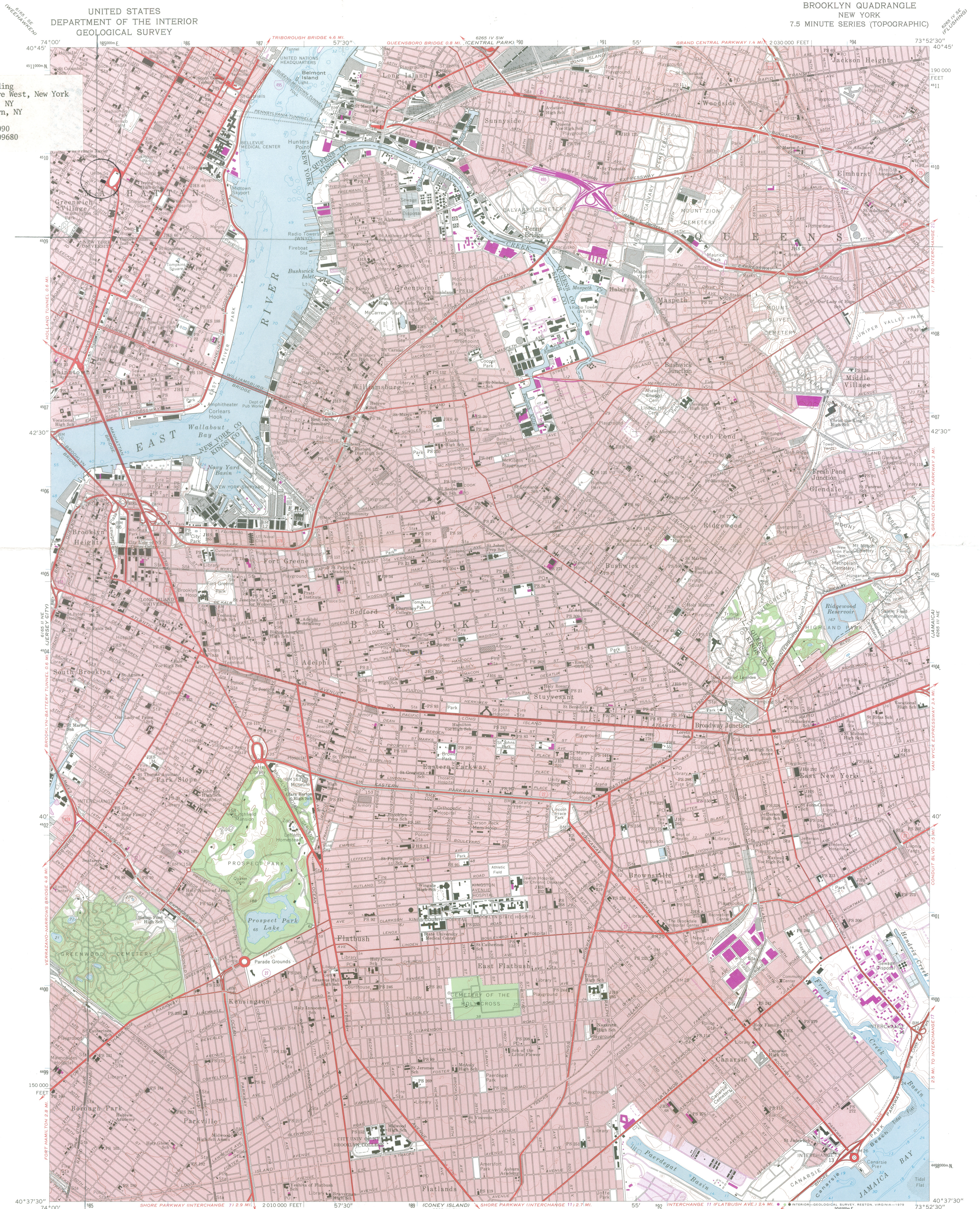
photo by: Alex Herrera, 1983
neg. at : Buchbinder/Warren Realty
One Union Square West
New York, N.Y. 10003

View south

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

BROOKLYN QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Lincoln Building
1 Union Square West, New York
New York Co., NY
Quad: Brooklyn, NY
Zone: 18
Easting: 585090
Northing: 4509680



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Revised in cooperation with New York Department of Transportation
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and City of New York Board of
Estimate and Apportionment

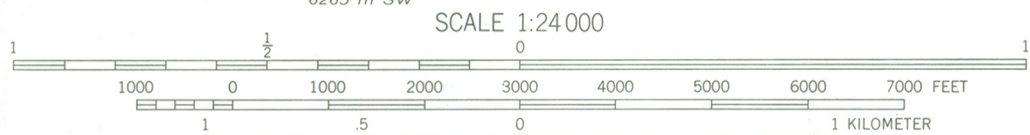
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1954, and from USC&GS Charts T-5094, T-5335, T-5454
T-5459, T-5460, and T-5449

Topography by planimetric surveys 1955-1956. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967

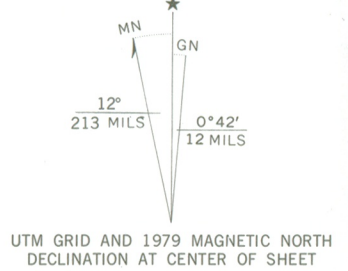
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts
275 (1964), 542 (1967), and 745 (1966). This information is
not intended for navigational purposes

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone
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
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 MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 4.2 FEET IN THE EAST RIVER
AND 5.2 FEET IN JAMAICA BAY



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ————— Light-duty —————
Unimproved dirt —————
Interstate Route ————— State Route —————

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

N4037.5—W7352.5/7.5

1967
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6265 III NW—SERIES V821

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 20192
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST