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

1 NAME
HISTORIC
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
226-246 East 49th Street; 227-245 East 48th Street

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY
X DISTRICT
BUILDING(S)
STRUCTURE
SITE
OBJECT

OWNERSHIP
PUBLIC
PRIVATE
BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION

STATUS
X OCCUPIED
UNOCCUPIED
WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE

PRESENT USE
AGRICULTURE
MUSEUM
COMMERCIAL
PARK
EDUCATIONAL
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
ENTERTAINMENT
GOVERNMENT
INDUSTRIAL
TRANSPORTATION
MILITARY
OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME
See Continuation Sheet

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
New York County Hall of Records

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE
Landmarks Preservation Commission LP-0279

DATE
June 21, 1966

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
The Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District is situated on a rise of land on the east side of midtown Manhattan. Located on East 48th and East 49th Streets between Second and Third Avenues, it is a tranquil enclave which consists of twenty 1860s brownstone buildings which were substantially altered in the 1920s. Six feet of each house's original rear lot line was ceded over to create a common pathway and garden complex which the townhouses share. The buildings are held together stylistically by their uniformity of height, stucco facades, neo-classical details and regular fenestration. The "sense of place" cannot only be attributed to the human scale of the complex, but to the fact that the enclave is further buffered from the bordering avenues by high-rise apartment complexes on the Second Avenue side and multi-story office buildings on the Third Avenue boundary.

The original twenty buildings which form Turtle Bay Gardens were erected by a speculative builder in the 1860s. The four-story, Italianate brownstones were purchased between 1919 and 1920 by Mrs. Walton Martin who instructed her architect, Clarence Dean, to remove the stoops, create rusticated English basements, provide uniform casement windows, and relieve the monotony of spalling brownstone facades with tinted stucco coatings. The floor plans of the buildings were improved: Dean placed the kitchens on the street facades, while the living rooms were oriented towards the rear garden enclave. Applied ornaments include: cast-iron balconies, pedimented parapets, quoins, pilasters, roundels, cartouches and stucco treatment. The use of applied ornament is playful: on the East 49th Street facade, a false parapet in the Flemish gable mode appears and is topped by a classical urn and flanked by cast-stone, turned balusters. Zodiac figures appear within plaster roundels on the East 48th Street facade—in addition to a lion and a ram, a turtle is used. The play on words continues in the use of the turtle motif within the finial of the cast-iron street railings.

The major cohesive design element occurs in the handling of the central garden facades and landscaping. The rear facades of the buildings are elegantly simple with the severe cornices, plain lintels and sills, uniform fenestration and weathered brick. Many of the buildings have top floor roof terraces with Spanish-tiled roof parapets, arcuated terrace openings, and wooden pergolas. Individually planted private gardens are separated from the shared central space by low masonry walls. The central axis is marked by a flagstone paved walkway and a fountain based on a Roman prototype found at the Villa Medici. Encircled by cast-iron benches, Italian garden sculptures of putti, and terra-cotta urns, the fountain is also shaded by a very old willow tree which figures in the 1949 book Here is New York by E.B. White. The rear garden, with its mature trees and ancient willow, recreates the tranquility which must have characterized the original Turtle Bay Farm.
United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District

Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y. Item number 4 Page 2

East 48th Street

#227-229 Blair Clark
c/o Detmold Real Estate
230 East 49th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

#231 Margaret McEvoy Doty
Detmold Real Estate
230 East 49th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

#233 Robert D. Brewster
233 East 48th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

#235 Dr. Rabin M. Sarda
337 East 50th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022

#237 Robert Gottlieb & ano
237 East 48th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

#239 Dr. Arsenio B. Vivera
239 East 48th Street
New York, NY 10017

#241 Halle S. Bach
241 East 48th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

#243 Margo Wintersteen
c/o Jeremy R. Wintersteen
243 East 48th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

#245 Delvalle S. Goldsmith
245 East 48th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

#247 American Friends Service Committee, Inc.
15 Rutherford Place
New York, N.Y. 10003

(See Continuation Sheet)
## Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address 1</th>
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<td>226-228</td>
<td>Dr. Dallas Pratt</td>
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<td>Anthony Romano</td>
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8. Significance

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<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
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Specific dates 1860s/1921-23  Builder/Architect /Clarence Dean

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District is architecturally and historically significant as an unaltered example of a 1920s planned community within the confines of a large urban area. Composed of twenty 1860s brownstone buildings that were substantially redesigned by architect Clarence Dean in the 1920s, the district is distinguished by its uniformity of scale, facade material and fenestration as well as its landscaped interior courtyard. The design of the complex is an outgrowth of the English terrace house schemes and the ideal of planning exemplified by the English garden suburb of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The district is noteworthy for its early recognition of protective covenants — the restrictions on height, extensions, fence placement and material and building use agreed to by the residents in the 1920s. The area is also significant for the theatrical and literary residents who have sought the privacy afforded by the enclave including Ruth Gordon, Garson Kanin, Katherine Hepburn, Leopold Stokowski, E.B. White, Tyrone Power and Dorothy Thompson.

The name "Turtle Bay" was derived from the cove off the East River extending from 45-48th Street. A small stream originating at Second Avenue and 48th Street ran into the cove. Historical records mention a profusion of turtles in this area with the "turtle feast" a noted occasion for local residents. By 1712, the name "Turtle Bay" was commonly used in wills and deeds. By the mid-eighteenth century, the "Turtle Bay Farm" extended roughly from 40-49th Street and from Third Avenue to the East River. Filled in for development purposes, the cove is now covered by gardens on the northern half of the United Nations grounds.

In 1919, Mrs. Walton Martin bought the twenty brownstone buildings and had them redesigned around an interior garden court created by the donation of six feet of each house's rear lot. The architect Clarence Dean renovated the facades and redesigned the interiors to afford a better view of the courtyard. The common garden is reminiscent of an intimate Italian courtyard with its flagstone walkway and fountain based on a Roman prototype found at the Villa Medici. The fountain is shaded by an old willow tree which figured prominently in E.B. White's book Here is New York (1949). In the 1920s, the residents took an unusual step and agreed to a series of protective covenants concerning height, additions, materials and building use.

The Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District is significant as a 1920s planned community which has retained the picturesque and intimate qualities of an English garden suburb in the heart of mid-town Manhattan.
9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \( \frac{11}{2} \)

Quadrangle name Central Park, N.Y. - N.J.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Western property line of 227-229 East 48th Street, the western property line of 226 East 49th Street, the eastern property line of 246 East 49th Street, and eastern property line of 247 East 48th Street. See attached map.

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

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<th>state</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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11. Form Prepared By

Contact:

name/title Larry E. Gobrecht, National Register Program Coordinator

organization Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

date 8/82

street & number Agency Building 1, Empire State Plaza

telephone (518) 474-0479

city or town Albany

state New York

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national \( \_ \_ \) state \( \_ \_ \) local \( \times \)

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

[Signature]

date 5/24/83

For NPS use only

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

[Signature]

date 7/11/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration


Form Prepared By:

Sarah Latham, Landmarks Preservation Specialist
Landmarks Preservation Commission
20 Vesey St.
New York, NY 10007
212-566-7577
TURTLE BAY GARDENS HISTORIC DISTRICT
MANHATTAN

DESIGNATED JUNE 21, 1966

Numbers show buildings inside boundary of district
### Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
**New York County**
**NEW YORK**

**Evaluator/Return Sheet**

**Working No.:** JUN 20 1983

**Federal Agency:** Substantive Review

**Summary Paragraph:**
Appears to be claiming significance under B as well as A. The mere fact that famous people lived here is not enough to qualify the buildings as significant in representing the historic contributions to society, etc. Primarily, their residency pays tribute to the success and attractiveness of the redesigned "community." Some photos are mislabeled.

**Recom./Criteria:** Accept - A, C

**Reviewer:** James

**Discipline:** Historical

**Date:** 7/21/83

---

**1. Name**

**2. Location**

**3. Classification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>Accessible</td>
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</table>

**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**
- **good**
- **fair**

**Check one**  
- deteriorated
- ruins
- unexposed

**Check one**  
- unaltered
- altered

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. Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
   New York, N. Y. O.
   Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
   Preservation Commission
   View of district from southeast
   (above).
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y.

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

48th Street facades from southeast.
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y. (0).

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission.

48th Street facades from southeast.
4. Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
   New York, N. Y. Co.
   Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
   Preservation Commission.
   Central portion of 48th Street facades.
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y. Co.

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Detail - 48th Street.
6. Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
   New York, N. Y.

   Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
            Preservation Commission

   Detail - 48th Street.
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y.


Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

48th Street facades.
8. Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
   New York, N. Y. 00.
   Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
            Preservation Commission.
   48th Street facades.
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y. 10011
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.
48th Street facades from southwest.
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y. C.
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission.
View of district from west (above).
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y.

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

View of Garden.
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y. 10017
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission
Detail - 48th Street railing.
13.

Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y.

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Detail - 48th Street facades.
Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
New York, N. Y.

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

48th Street facade.
12. Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District
   New York, N. Y. C.
   Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
   Preservation Commission
   49th Street from northeast.