

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 16 1985

date entered SEP 18 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Minton's Playhouse

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 206-210 West 118th Street not for publication

city, town New York vicinity of

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A 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: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

street & number 100 Gold Street

city, town New York, New York vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Surrogate's Court

street & number 51 Chambers Street

city, town New York state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission Harlem Survey - 1984 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

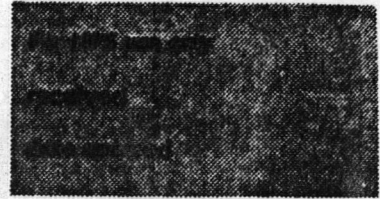
date federal state county local

depository for survey records NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, 20 Vesey Street

city, town New York state New York

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y. Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 7 Page 2

metal), are enriched with delicate blue and yellow hues visible from the street level. A row of lintils runs beneath the modillions. Projecting cornices exist over walls on West 118th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue with stone parapets on the other roof edges.

To the east of the main entrance to the hotel on West 118th Street was the entrance to Minton's Playhouse. The neon sign for Minton's remains but is deteriorated. A canopy from the door of Minton's to the street has been removed. The interior of Minton's does not appear to have been altered since 1939, when the former dining room was converted into the jazz club, but it is in a deteriorated though restorable condition. The L-shaped room contains a small stage at the southern end, a 38-foot intact hardwood bar along the eastern wall and a seating area, which still contains some of the booths, in the western area of the space. A wall mural, approximately 10'x5', was painted directly above the slightly elevated stage in 1948 by Charles Graham. It depicts musicians Charlie Christian, Hot Lips Page, Tony Scott, and an unidentified drummer. It is in fair condition. The space contains few other elements of architectural distinction. Minton's also houses a kitchen which was built in the passageway between two wings of the building.

The interior walls of the hotel are of hollow clay tiles covered by plaster. Floors are framed by steel beams inlaid with clay tile blocks. A concrete fill over the blocks supports wood flooring. Many of the interior ceiling corners are artfully carved. The existing layout is of bedrooms periodically divided by bathrooms and closets. The integrity of the interior spaces, though modest, is intact.

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input 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 1939-1949 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Minton's Playhouse, located on the ground floor of the Cecil Hotel in Harlem, is significant in the history of American music for its pivotal role in the development of jazz during the 1940s. Recognized by musicians and historians as one of the foremost jam session nightclubs in the United States, Minton's is famed especially as the principal site of the formal and informal experimentations during the 1940s that led to the "bebop revolution," a fundamental transformation of the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic basis of jazz composition and improvisation that ushered in a distinctly sophisticated and virtuosic approach to jazz music.¹

This complex approach, the dominant new jazz style of the 1940s and early 1950s throughout the country, remains a key element of contemporary jazz. It is a preferred mode both for many of the senior generation of performing musicians (such as Dizzy Gillespie, Tommy Flanagan, Barry Harris, Jackie McClean, etc.) and for numerous younger musicians (most notably Wynton Marsalis), and its characteristic harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic elements form the underlying basis for much of current "mainstream" jazz. Even the "free jazz" of Ornette Coleman has its roots in Charlie Parker's bebop phrasing and conception.

The bebop revolution, fostered at Minton's, also is especially significant as a turning point in the recognition of jazz as a sophisticated art form; with the advent of this style, for the first time jazz musicians were widely perceived in this country as serious artists as well as entertainers. The quintet setting favored by bebop performers--in part due to the economic difficulties in the post-war period of maintaining large touring bands--furthered this by providing the opportunity for extended improvised solos, thus heightening the importance of individual creativity.

As Ralph Ellison put it in his article on Minton's Playhouse "The Birth of Bebop" written in 1952:

...what was happening at Minton's was a continuing symposium of jazz, a summation of all the styles, personal and traditional, of jazz. Here it was

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Attached Bibliography

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Central Park West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	8	5	8	8	3	1	3	1	0	4	1	5	1	1	7	3	1	9	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing											

B

Zone			Easting						Northing											

C

Zone			Easting						Northing											

D

Zone			Easting						Northing											

E

Zone			Easting						Northing											

F

Zone			Easting						Northing											

G

Zone			Easting						Northing											

H

Zone			Easting						Northing											

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is located on the southeast corner of West 118th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue in New York City, Block 1923, Lot 38.

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

NA

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Merrill Hesch

organization NYS Office Parks, Recreation, and

Historic Preservation
date July 1985

street & number Empire State Plaza

telephone 518-474-0456

city or town Albany 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

date August 12, 1985

For NPS use only

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

date 9/18/85

Keeper of the National Register

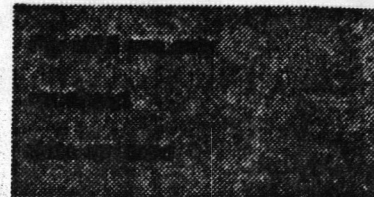
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y.
Minton's Playhouse Item number 8 Page 2

possible to hear its resources of techniques, ideas, harmonic structure, melodic phrasing and rhythmical possibilities explored more thoroughly than was possible ever before. It was also possible to hear the first attempts toward a conscious statement of the sensibility of the younger generation of musicians as they worked out the techniques, structures, and rhythmical patterns with which to express themselves....jazz had reached a crisis, and new paths were certain to be searched for and found.²

The bebop revolution also had a significant effect on post-war American culture, these musical developments clearly altering the course of American literature. This can be seen in the highly influential extended improvisational fiction of Jack Kerouac, his long works consciously written like jazz solos without revision, as well as the declamatory poetry of Allen Ginsberg. (Both writers lived on the fringes of Harlem as students at Columbia University in the mid-1940s)

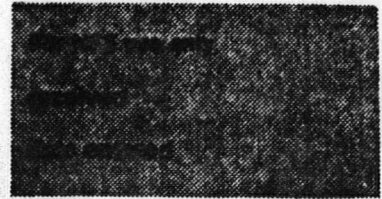
Jazz is a distinctive and uniquely American contribution to the creative arts of the world. The music historian and composer-pianist Billy Taylor holds that it is "America's classical music," and he further states:

As a musical language, it has developed steadily from a simple expression of the consciousness of black people to a national music which expresses Americana to Americans as well as to people from other countries. As a classical music with its own standards of form, complexity, literacy, and excellence, jazz has been a major influence on the music of the world for more than eighty years...³

An extensive description of the nature of jazz rests beyond the bounds of this brief narrative; and, as Max Harrison has written in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, the standard musicological encyclopedia, "Attempts at a concise—even a coherent—definition of jazz have invariably failed."⁴ From a historical point of view, it can be said that there has been a progression of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y.
Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8

Page 3

distinctive styles--identifiable by their special harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic characteristics, as well as compositional and performance natures--known as jazz. These various styles arose in specific eras, though many of them (or elements of many of them) continue to the present as vital and viable forms of musical expression. The dominant jazz styles of the 1930s and 1940s, styles with many notable performers to the present, were swing and bebop (or bop), bebop having developed from swing in the 1940s.

The eminent French musicologist Andre Hodeir considers bebop to be

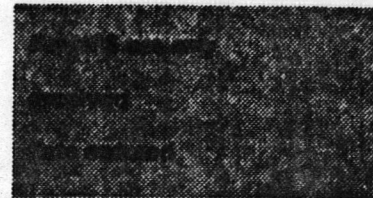
...a modernist movement in jazz which had a deep influence on the genre's history. It developed during World War II as musicians like Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Christian, and later Charlie Parker experimented with the principal elements of the new style in a series of remarkable 'jam sessions' at Minton's, a night club in Harlem, New York.⁵

Hodeir goes on to describe the elements of the style developed by the pioneers at Minton's:

Among other innovations they superimposed melodic lines closer to the spirit of jazz on the harmonic structure of 'standard' songs, creating a new repertory on which to base their improvisation. The improvisation became more searching than hitherto, and the speed of harmonic, rhythmic and melodic motion led to dense, compact performances. Instrumental sonority (without vibrato) became more tense and mobile. The rhythm section was thinned out, the guitar disappeared, and the pianist spaced his accompanying chords more irregularly; the drummer explored the tension between a permanent beat on the cymbal (supported by a walking bass) and syncopated

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y. Item number 8 Page 4
Minton's Playhouse, NY

strokes divided among the snare, tom-tom and bass drums, often interacting closely with the implied polyrhythms of the solo line. The range of tempos became wider, with a tendency to the extremely fast (at times exceeding 360 crotchets per minute); this is partly why bop was thought to be a style for virtuosos...6

Musicologists have asserted that bebop is deeply rooted in the historical continuum of jazz, despite its seemingly revolutionary departures. As Max Harrison wrote:

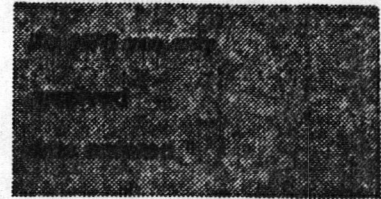
In fact many of the innovations of bop, or 'bebop,' as the jazz of the immediate postwar period was called, had been pioneered not only by advanced swing players like Art Tatum and Coleman Hawkins but also by the New York school of the late 1920s and by Beiderbecke. The rhythmic subdivisions of bop that often turned it into 8/8 rather than 4/4 had been anticipated in ragtime performances like James Europe's Down Home Rag (...1913).... Even bop's extensions of executive technique, particularly in terms of mobility, had precedents, as may be heard by setting Dizzy Gillespie's virtuoso Be Bop (...1945) beside the equally accomplished Heckler's Hop of Roy Eldridge (...1937) and Till Times Get Better by Jabbo Smith (...1929)....

However, bop musicians generally, and [Charlie] Parker especially, did increase the expressivity in jazz improvisation; they used more chromatic and convoluted melodic lines which implied a greater number and variety of passing harmonies, and polyrhythms which, in their soloists' close partnerships with the drummers, arose from a constant shifting of the accent within small note values.7

Throughout the 1940s, the regular communal jam sessions held at Minton's became popular with professional musicians who were employed at the numerous

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



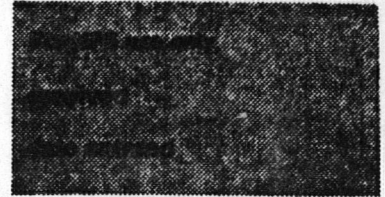
Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y.
Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8 Page 5

clubs, theaters, and dance halls that thrived in New York during the period. These jam sessions were basic to the new developments in jazz, for they provided an opportunity for extended experimental improvisations in a responsive and challenging setting. Those held at Minton's in the 1940s attracted the acknowledged masters as well as the progressive innovators in this generation of jazz musicians.

While elements of bebop were presaged by the work of certain individual players across the country,⁸ Minton's Playhouse was a focus for its mature development: it was a place where these diverse elements coalesced into a coherent musical style.

Minton's Playhouse was located in the Cecil Hotel in Harlem. The building was constructed in 1895 and functioned as a residential hotel. Designed in the Second Renaissance Revival style, the building is a typical example of late nineteenth century multiple family housing in the New York City metro area. The surrounding streets, like much of Harlem, are characterized by tenement houses of similar scale, materials and design. In 1939, Henry Minton, owner of the hotel, converted a first floor dining room for use as a club. An exterior entrance to the club was created in a window opening and an exterior neon sign identified it. (Photo 2.) The club space itself was undistinguished, consisting of a small L-shaped room with a stage, a bar and a seating area. The only decoration of note was a mural painted over the stage in 1948 by a well-known local artist that depicts some of the musicians who played at Minton's. The hotel building survives largely intact and retains the character and appearance present during the period of significance; thus it contributes to our understanding of the history of Minton's Playhouse. Although deteriorated, the club space itself retains some of its original features, including the floor plan, the bar, some booths and the mural.

Henry Minton, was a saxophonist and respected community leader who, as first black delegate to Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians, played a significant role in the integration of the union, helping to professionalize the status of black musicians. Henry Minton hired a fellow Masonic Lodge member (from Harlem's "Musicians' Lodge"), the pioneer tenor saxophonist Albert "Happy" Caldwell, to form a house band. In the fall of 1940, Minton brought in the veteran bandleader Teddy Hill to manage the playhouse, after Hill had been forced by

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y. Item number 8 Page 6
Minton's Playhouse, NY.

economic difficulties to dissolve his well-known dance band. In turn, Hill--sympathetic to the new ideas of young musicians--hired Kenny Clarke to lead a new house band at the club.

Clarke is credited (in the words of the historian of jazz Martin Williams) as the man "who virtually invented modern jazz drumming."⁹ In his younger years, his innovative rhythmic conceptions led to dismissal from several large bands (including Teddy Hill's), for some older musicians simply refused to play with him. At Minton's, he was free to gather around him kindred musical spirits (Thelonious Monk, piano; Nick Fenton, bass; Joe Guy, trumpet), and in this unconstrained setting, playing seven nights a week, he continued to develop his pioneering and profoundly influential style and technique.

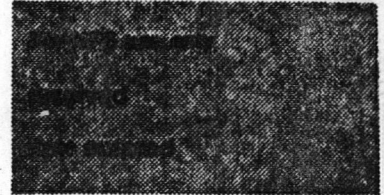
According to Clarke (in a rare interview granted some six months before his January 1985 death), his intention was to establish a strong rhythm section (piano, bass, and drums) so that guest soloists would join them regularly. Almost immediately, the trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (a compatriot from the Teddy Hill band) joined Clarke's group on an informal basis, following his work at the Savoy Ballroom and other such commercial venues. When in New York, the pioneer electric guitarist Charlie Christian would also drop by after his evening's performances with the Benny Goodman Orchestra, so often in fact that Teddy Hill bought an amplifier and set it permanently on the stage for him. According to Clarke, it was at Minton's, influencing and being influenced by these innovative musicians, that his pioneering conceptions reached maturity.¹⁰

The jam sessions at Minton's Playhouse became a forum for new musical ideas, and the collaborations of the core group of Clarke, Monk, Gillespie, and Christian (with Charlie Parker joining them occasionally at Minton's) were fundamentally significant in the forging of a new style and conception that changed the course of jazz. This music, now known as "bop" or "bebop," was called by many of the musicians in the pre-war years "that music they're playing up at Minton's."¹¹

These developments achieved mature expression through regular communal jam sessions, as well as occasional afternoon meetings at which the nucleus of the Minton's musicians would study harmony together and work out new chord progressions

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**
New York County, N.Y.



Continuation sheet Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8 Page 7

to familiar melodies. While a few other sites in Harlem (for the most part brief-lived, such as Clarke Monroe's Uptown House) also were intermittently important centers in the early 1940s, Minton's especially became known as the place where progressive musicians from diverse locales throughout the nation--Kansas City, Albuquerque, Baltimore, South Carolina farm towns, etc.-- met to forge a new musical vocabulary. As the musicologist Leroy Ostransky has pointed out: "Minton's was unique as the place where at the time jazzmen were able to focus their attention on each other's experiments."¹²

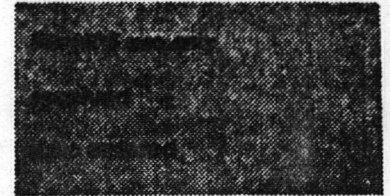
Dan Morgenstern (director of the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University) focuses specifically on the development of bebop as the source of Minton's fame:

Minton's was by no means the only after-hours jazz oasis in Harlem in 1941-1942; Charlie Parker, for instance, frequented Monroe's Uptown House. It has become the most famous because...[four musicians] were fixtures of the place; two as members of the houseband, the others as frequent sitters--in. The former, of course, were Thelonious Monk and Kenny Clarke; the latter Charlie Christian and Dizzy Gillespie. Because they played together so often, they were able to establish certain rhythmic and harmonic patterns which later were expanded into the basic formulae of bop.¹³

The jam sessions were basic to these new developments in jazz, for they provided an opportunity for extended experimental improvisations in a musically responsive and challenging setting. At Minton's, big band musicians were freed from the constraints of playing a few commercially acceptable eight- or sixteen-bar solos in the course of an evening's dance music at the Cotton Club, the Savoy Ballroom, or at society affairs. Instead, they were concerned at Minton's with the challenging demands of their colleagues.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y.
Minton's Playhouse, NY item number 8

Page 8

The unique nature of Minton's--as a jam session center for almost all the great jazz musicians of the age--was possible due to the special circumstances of New York and Harlem. In the 1930s and especially in the 1940s (continuing on to the 1950s), numerous clubs, theaters, and dance halls throughout New York provided exceptional opportunities for musicians to gain employment. Thus, New York became a center for many of the finest professional musicians of the nation, and those in the best known touring bands inevitably performed there during the course of a year. Harlem nightclubs, such as Minton's, stayed open later than the downtown sites, so that when musicians wanted to relax after an evening of entertaining others, they often went to clubs in Harlem, where many of them lived. Minton's Playhouse was one such club, known for its unpretentious atmosphere and its good food (an important consideration for a traveling musician).¹⁴

Within a few years of its opening, Minton's was known by musicians throughout the country as the serious meeting place of both progressive innovators and the established masters of earlier styles. For example, in 1944 the pianist and jazz educator Billy Taylor came as a young and hopeful musician to New York from Washington, D. C. with the intention of living as close to Minton's as possible. Dr. Taylor recalls:

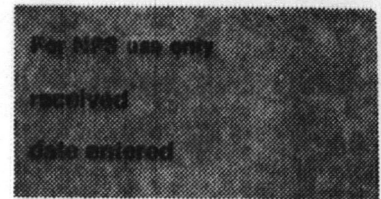
Everybody knew about Minton's, all the young musicians, because that was a legendary place already. Teddy Hill had been a famous bandleader--he was the manager; Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Lester Young--all the great artists went there to jam. All over the country it was known that this was one of the places where you could go and, whether you were lucky enough to sit in there or not, at least you could hear the legendary musicians jamming with one another. The opportunities to do that in any other town were relatively limited.

...People would come from all over, from out of town, from out of the country, because musicians talked about it. They'd say, "Where do you go to jam in New York? You go to Minton's."¹⁵

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

New York County, N.Y.



Continuation sheet Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8

Page 9

Minton's became this special center in good part due to the efforts and support of the manager, Teddy Hill, who made the club an economic haven for musicians whose innovative conceptions made it difficult for them to find work elsewhere. Musicians of the time are emphatic in their recognition of Hill's significant support. For example, Kenny Clarke states:

Teddy was a saxophone player, and he knew what we were trying to do. He gave us a good hand. No one else would've given us that much rein.¹⁶

And Billy Taylor adds:

I think that Teddy Hill was as concerned about musicians' needs--financially and the need to get their music together --as he was about style. I don't think he had any particular brief for bebop per se. He was not a bebop band leader, but he just felt that the new music deserved a place to get itself together, and some of the older musicians who were transitional figures needed a place to work, and some of the guys that couldn't easily get jobs in other places could find a place to enter work as a sideman or sometimes as a leader.¹⁷

An additional economic factor was significant in the establishment of Minton's as a long-lasting center for jam sessions. Difficulties arose for many clubs in Harlem featuring jam sessions, since the musicians' union would not permit its members to play without pay, and the union sought to enforce this rule vigorously. Dizzy Gillespie relates: "There were big fines for playing jam sessions, and the union had 'walking delegates' who would check on all the places that were frequented by jazz musicians. So we were taking a big risk." While the fines could be as high as five hundred dollars, "we were somewhat immune from this at Minton's because Henry Minton, who owned the place, was the first 'colored' union delegate in New York."¹⁸

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

New York County, N.Y.

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8

Page 10

Entertainment at Minton's in the 1940s went from ten until four, seven nights a week. From all accounts, in this period of significance, the evenings were loosely structured. Kenny Clarke recalls:

After we played a set or two, fellows would start drifting in, wanting to play.... We invited anyone who understood what we were doing to come up and play.¹⁹

Mondays were reserved for informal playing; to ensure a steady round of guest celebrities, Teddy Hill would provide a hash-and-biscuit dinner for all the performers currently appearing at the Apollo Theatre (NR listed), the premier center for black entertainment in the 1940's (as well as in other decades).²⁰

In recalling the musical excitement of Minton's in the 1940s, Billy Taylor states that often the session would be in full gear at the official closing hour of four, so the front door would be locked, and the musicians would continue playing until five or six in the morning.²¹ The various records culled from Columbia undergraduate Jerry Newman's 1941 direct-disc recordings at Minton's preserve this sense of excitement and reveal the nascent elements of bebop as they were explored at that time, as well as the diversity of styles (and abilities) of Minton's musicians.²²

The flavor of an early jam session is captured in a large mural over the bandstand completed in 1948 by the Harlem artist Charles Graham. In addition to an unidentified musician beating out a rhythm with whisk brooms, Graham depicts Minton's stalwarts Charlie Christian, the trumpeter Hot Lips Page, and the clarinetist Tony Scott (see attached photo). It is important to note that while most of the musicians and patrons of the club were black, white musicians such as Scott (who eventually led the house band in 1953-1954), Dick Katz, John Carisi, Remo Palmieri, Bill Evans, and numerous others were welcomed there.

While Minton's is famous among musicians and historians as the site of the bebop revolution in the 1940s, the club had a vital existence through the early 1960s as a jam session center, with intermittent operation until 1974, when a fire

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

New York County, N.Y.



Continuation sheet Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8 Page 11

led to the abandonment of the Cecil Hotel by its owner. An indication of its vitality in the 1950s is provided by Dick Katz, house pianist at the playhouse with the Tony Scott Quartet in 1953-1954, who recalls that his opening night included--in addition to instrumental numbers by the quartet--a shake dancer, the master tap dancer "Baby" Lawrence, and a young singer named Carmen McRae.²³

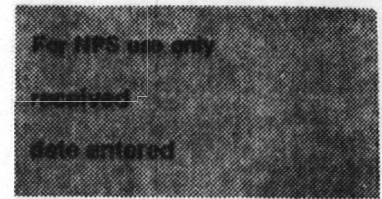
In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the manager Teddy Hill sought to raise the quality of music by bringing some order to the jam sessions. Tenor saxophonist Eddie Lockjaw Davis, then leading the house band, was given new responsibilities:

That particular policeman's job, as I call it, was handed to me by Teddy Hill, who was manager at the time. One night he announced to me that he couldn't manage the club and the bandstand at the same time, and that he felt whoever was the leader should be responsible for who played and who didn't. That became a sticky job.... In some instances I was labeled as a tyrant, but on the whole the guys appreciated it. The word spread. If you can't play, don't go on Lockjaw's thing, because he'll ask you off. In doing that, we got the best musicians. It was most relaxed. You had a chance to hear different stylists, different musicians. It was a big classroom, and it was pleasant. It was a place to experiment with what you knew.²⁴

Music from Minton's in the early 1950s and early 1960s has been preserved in recordings. The first long-playing record made at the playhouse, released on Brunswick and now an out-of-print collector's item, features the Tony Scott Quartet in 1953 (Music After Midnight). A series of four albums, all recorded on 6 January 1961, features the two-tenor chases of Eddie Lockjaw Davis and Johnny Griffin; some of the jazz standards played on these four records were composed by the Minton's bebop innovators Kenny Clarke, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk.²⁵ All these recordings capture the special ambience of the place, relaxed yet musically serious, that contributed to the club's fame.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet New York County, N.Y. Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8 Page 12

As outlined above, musicians who played regularly at Minton's during its period of special historical significance, the 1940s, speak of their experiences as formative: for many, Minton's was the place where--due to unique conditions conducive to musical freedom and growth--they truly developed their ideas and abilities, leading to the coalescence and codification of a distinctive new style that continues to be a fundamentally significant force in contemporary music. The musicians' perceptions of the historical importance of their experiences at Minton's is echoed in the more formal analyses of the most respected musicologists specializing in jazz studies, as quoted above. They hold that the vitality of American jazz was significantly nurtured and enhanced by the free exchange of musical ideas at Minton's in the 1940s. The events that occurred at Minton's Playhouse (what historians now consider meetings of musical giants) and the music created there (a small fraction of which has been recorded, but which clearly played an important role in transforming the course of jazz) are--in a fundamental way--exceptionally significant to the history of American music.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

New York County, N.Y.

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Minton's Playhouse, NYC Item number 8

Page 13

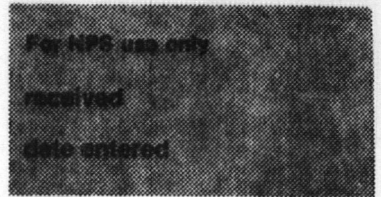
ENDNOTES

1. This view is shared both by historians and musicians. See as examples among standard historical works: Ira Gitler, Jazz Masters of the Forties (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 69; Martin Williams, The Jazz Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 156; Frank Tirro, Jazz: A History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), pp. 243 ff. For statements by noted musicians, see as examples: Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, To Be or Not to Bop: Memoirs--Dizzy Gillespie (New York: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 134-151; Hampton Hawes and Don Asher, Raise Up Off Me: A Portrait of Hampton Hawes (New York: Da Capo, 1979), p. 20.
2. Ralph Ellison, Birth of Bebop, Reprinted in Esquire Magazine, August 1, 1983, p. 24.
3. Billy Taylor, Jazz Piano: A Jazz History (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1982), p. 3.
4. Max Harrison, "Jazz," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 9, p. 561.
5. Andre Hodeir, "Bop," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 3, p. 41.(emphasis added).
6. Ibid.
7. Max Harrison, "Jazz," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 9, p. 573.
8. See Gitler's Jazz Masters of the Forties for extended discussion throughout the book on the origins of bebop.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

New York County, New York



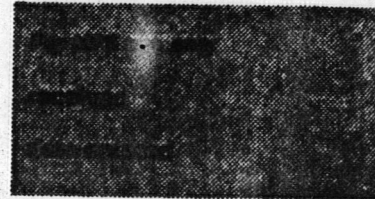
Continuation sheet Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8

Page 14

9. See Martin Williams, The Jazz Tradition, p. 206. This view is widely held. See also: Gitler, Jazz Masters of the Forties, pp. 174-183; Tirro, Jazz: A History, p. 276; Leroy Ostransky, Understanding Jazz (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 214; Nathan Davis, Writings on Jazz (Dubuque, Iowa: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1978), p. 97.
10. Taped interview with Kenny Clarke, 1 July 1984, New York City.
11. According to Kenny Clarke, as quoted by Arthur Taylor, Notes and Tones: Musician to Musician Interviews (New York: Perigee, 1982), p. 194.
12. Ostransky, Understanding Jazz, p. 202.
13. Dan Morgenstern, liner notes to Trumpet Battle at Minton's, Xanadu 107, 1975.
14. Extensive historical description of Minton's within the Harlem scene of the 1940s, as well as personal reminiscences, are included in a taped interview with Billy Taylor, 7 July 1984, New York City.
15. Taylor interview.
16. Clarke interview.
17. Taylor interview.
18. Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, To Be or Not to Bop, pp. 139-140.
19. Clarke interview.
20. Kenny Clarke, Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project Transcription (30 September 1977), vol. 1, p. 103.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet New York County, New York
Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 8

Page 15

21. Taylor interview.

22. Such records still in print include: Don Byas, Live at Minton's, Jazz Anthology 5121; Charlie Christian, Live Sessions at Minton's (originally issued as The Men from Minton's), Jazz Anthology 5122; Joe Guy and Hot Lips Page, Trumpet Battle at Minton's, Xanadu 107.

23. Taped interview with Dick Katz, 6 July 1984, New York City.

24. Eddie Lockjaw Davis, quoted in Arthur Taylor, Notes and Tones, pp. 84-85.

25. Two of these albums still are in print: The First Set/Recorded Live at Minton's, Prestige 7309; and The Late Show/Recorded Live at Minton's, Prestige 7357.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Attached Bibliography

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Central Park West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	18	5	8	8	3	1	3	1	0	4	1	5	1	1	7	3	1	9	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing											

B

Zone			Easting						Northing											

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is located on the southeast corner of West 118th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue in New York City, Block 1923, Lot 38.

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

name/title Merrill Hesch

organization NYS Office Parks, Recreation, and

Historic Preservation
date July 1985

street & number Empire State Plaza

telephone 518-474-0456

city or town Albany 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

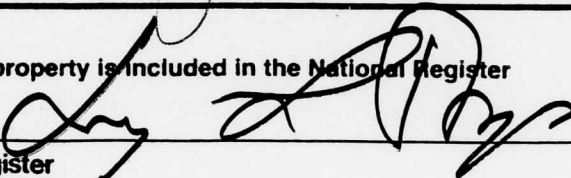


title Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

date August 13, 1985

For NPS use only

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



date 9/18/85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

New York County, New York

Continuation sheet Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number 9

Page 1

Selected Bibliography: Principal Sources on Minton's and its Context

Anderson, Jervis. This Was Harlem: A Cultural Portrait, 1900-1950. New York: 1982.

Charters, Samuel and Kunststadt, Leonard. Jazz: A History of the New York Scene. New York: 1962.

Davis, Nathań. Writings in Jazz. Dubuque, Iowa: 1978.

Driggs, Frank and Lewine, Harris. Black Beauty, White Heat: A Pictorial History of Classic Jazz. New York: 1982.

Ellison, Ralph. "The Birth of Bebop," Esquire Magazine, August, 1952.

Gillespie, Dizzy with Fraser, Al. To Be or Not to Bop: Memoirs. New York: 1979.

Gitler, Ira. Jazz Masters of the Forties. New York: 1966.

Harrison, Max, "Jazz," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. 9. London: 1980

Hawes, Hampton and Don Asker, Raise Up Off Me: A Portrait of Hampton Hawes. New York: 1979.

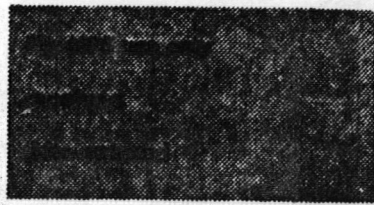
Hodeir, Andre, "Bop," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Vol. 3. London: 1980.

Jazz Oral History Project (Smithsonian Institution):
Interview Transcripts

Kenny Clarke. 30 September 1977, Paris
(4 volumes).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet New York County, New York
Minton's Playhouse, NY Item number

9

Page 2

Happy Caldwell. May 1976, Washington, D.C.
(1 volume).

Lewis, David Levering. When Harlem Was in Vogue. New York: 1981.

Morgenstern, Dan. Liner Notes to Trumpet Battle at Minton's, Xanadu 107, 1975.

Ostransky, Leroy. Understanding Jazz. Englewood Cliffs: 1977.

Taylor, Arthur. Notes and Tones: Musician to Musician Interviews. New York: 1982

Taylor, Billy. Jazz Piano: A Jazz History. Dubuque, Iowa: 1982.

Tirro, Frank. Jazz: A History. New York: 1977.

Ullman, Michael. Jazz Lives: Portraits in Words and Pictures. New York: 1980.

Williams, Martin. The Jazz Tradition. Oxford: 1983.

Interviews

Kenny Clarke (Drummer and leader of house band at Minton's 1940-1943 and intermittently through the mid-1950's), 1 July 1984, New York (taped).

Dick Katz (House pianist at Minton's, 1953-1954), 6 July 1984, New York (taped).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

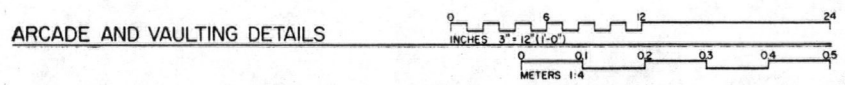
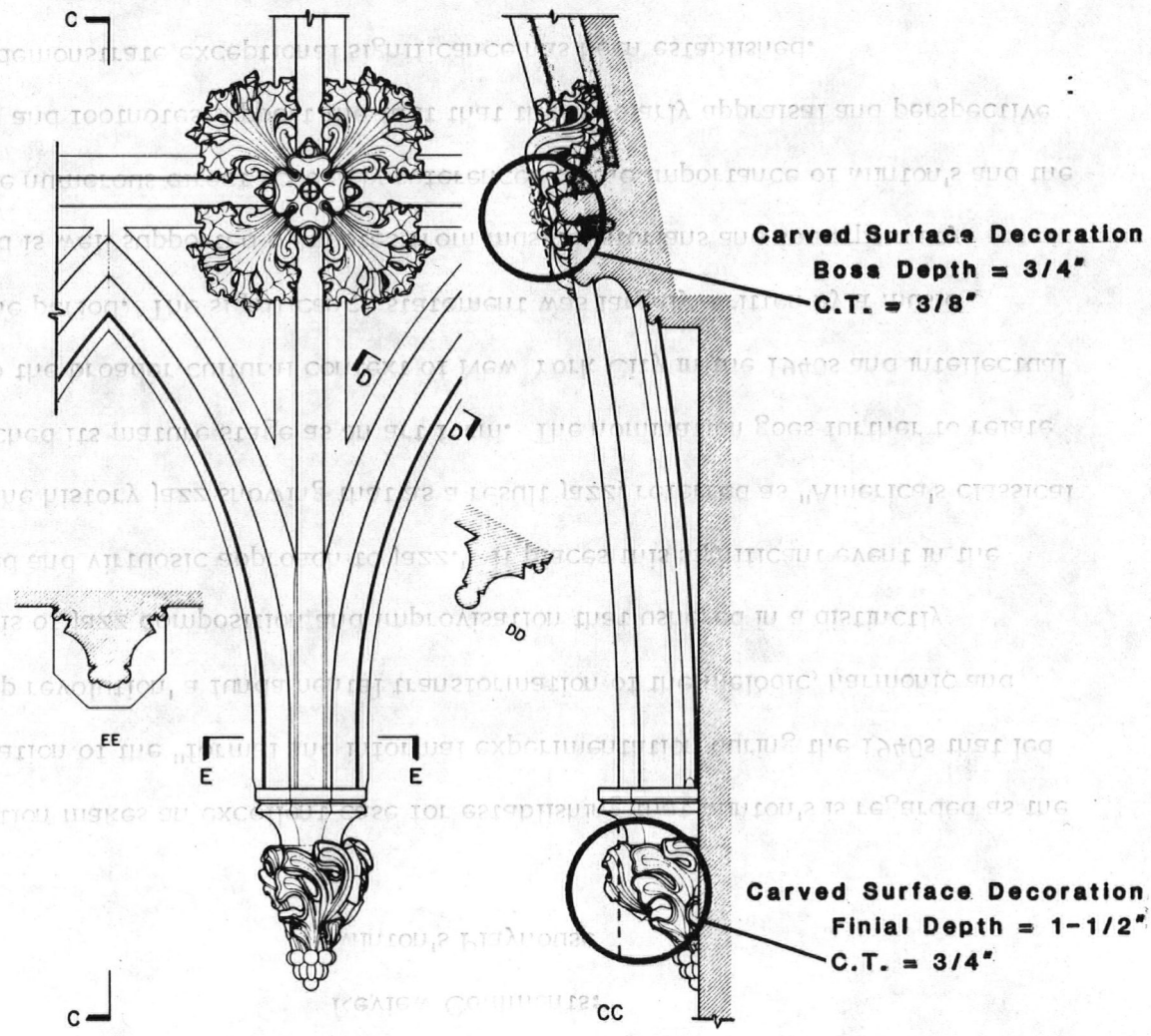
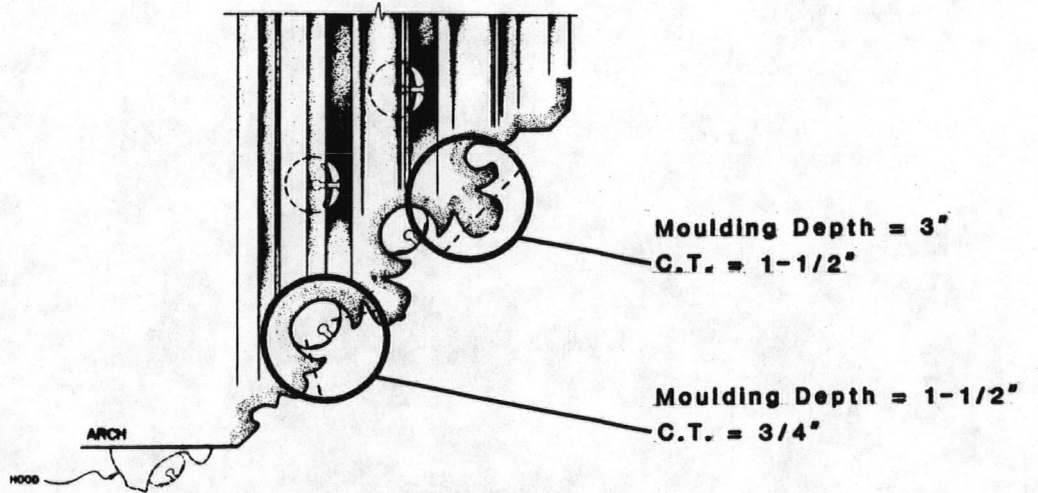
Continuation sheet New York County, New York Item number 11
Minton's Playhouse, NYC

Page 2

Nomination researched and written by:

Dr. Raoul Birnbaum (Section 8)
10 Park Avenue
New York, New York

Roberta Washington (Section 7)
123 West 126th Street
New York, New York



14307, #10

Review Comments:

Minton's Playhouse

The nomination makes an excellent case for establishing that Minton's is regarded as the primary location of the "formal and informal experimentation during the 1940s that led to the 'bebop revolution' a fundamental transformation of the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic basis of jazz composition and improvisation that ushered in a distinctly sophisticated and virtuosic approach to jazz." It places this significant event in the context of the history jazz showing that as a result jazz, referred as "America's classical music", reached its mature stage as an art form. The nomination goes further to relate the event to the broader cultural context of New York City in the 1940s and intellectual history of the period. The significance statement was largely written by a music historian and is well supported by quotes from music historians and some primary sources. The numerous direct scholarly references to the importance of Minton's and the bibliography and footnotes support the fact that the scholarly appraisal and perspective required to demonstrate exceptional significance has been established.

50
Re #
85002423

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Minton's Playhouse
New York County
NEW YORK

Substantive Review

AUG 16 1985

Working No. _____

Fed. Reg. Date: 2-4-86

Date Due: 9/2/85 - 9/30/85

Action: ACCEPT 9-18-85

RETURN

REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

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

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

1/9 Jerry Rogers

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
- good
- fair
- deteriorated
- ruins
- 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: _____



CECIL HOTEL
206-210 West 118th. Street
New York City, New York

Photographer: Sheldon Collins
Date photograph was taken: July 10, 1984
Location of photograph negative: Vera Institute of
Justice, 30 East 39th. Street, New York City

Description of view:

The photograph depicts the mural completed in 1948
by Charles Graham. The mural is located above the
bandstand in Minton's Playhouse.

The photograph was taken approximately ten feet
away from the bandstand area with the camera facing
the entire view.

Photograph number 1



Minton's Playhouse
206-210 West 118th Street
New York, New York County, NY
Photog: Merrill Hesch, 1984
Neg.: NY SHPO
View: North and east facade

1



2

Minton's Playhouse
206-210 West 118th Street
New York, New York County, NY
Photog: Merrill Hesch, 1984
Neg: NY SHPO
View: North facade with Minton's entrance



Minton's Playhouse
206-210 West 118th Street
New York, New York County, New York
Photo: Vera Institute, 1984
Neg: Vera Institute, 377 Broadway,
New York, NY 10013

View: playhouse space looking
at bar

#3



Minton's Playhouse
206-210 West 118th Street
New York, New York County, New York
Photo: Vera Institute, 1984
Neg: Vera Institute, 377 Broadway,
New York, NY 10013

View: playhouse space looking
towards bar.

2 of 7

#4



Minton's Playhouse

206-210 West 118th Street

New York, New York County, NY

Photog and neg: Vera Institute, 377 Bway,
NY, NY 10013; 1984

View: Minton's interior, looking south,
toward stage

3 of 7

#5



Minton's Playhouse

206-210 West 118th Street

New York, New York County, NY

Photog and neg: Vera Institute, 377 Bway,
NY, NY, 10013: 1984

View: seating area, NW corner

4 of 7

#6



Minton's Playhouse
206-210 West 118th Street
New York, New York County, New York
Photo: Vera Institute, 1984
Neg: Vera Institute, 377 Broadway,
New York, NY 10013

View: playhouse space looking
north from stage

7



Minton's Playhouse
206-210 West 118th Street
New York, New York County, New York
Photo: Vera Institute, 1984
Neg: Vera Institute, 377 Broadway,
New York, NY 10013

View: playhouse space bar detail,
east wall

6 of 7

#8



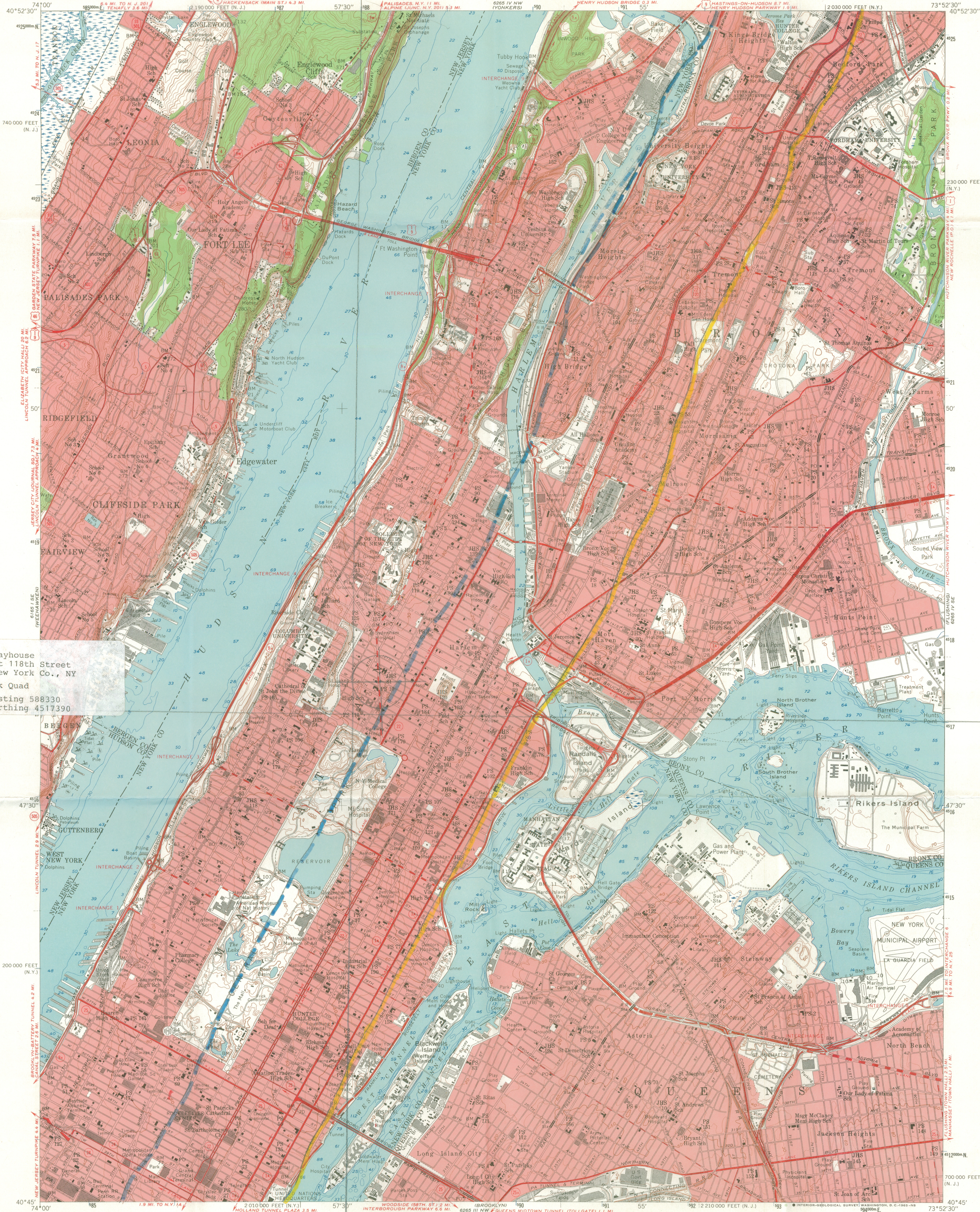
Minton's Playhouse
206-210 West 118th Street
New York, New York County, NY

Photog and negs: Vera Institute, 377 Bway,
NY, NY 10013; 1984

View: Minton's interior, toward stage,
looking south

7 of 7

#9



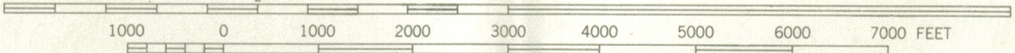
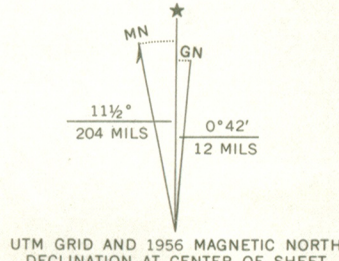
Minton's Playhouse
206-210 West 118th Street
New York, New York Co., NY
Central Park Quad
Zone 18, Easting 588330
Northing 4517390

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USC&GS, New Jersey Geodetic Survey, 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-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 and planetable
surveys. Field check 1956

Hydrography compiled from USC&GS charts 226, 274,
745, 746, and 747 (1956)

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
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 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, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt - - - - -
U.S. Route □ State Route ○

CENTRAL PARK, N. Y. - N. J.
SW/4 HARLEM 15' QUADRANGLE
N4045-W7352.5/7.5

1956

AMS 6265 IV SW - SERIES V821

08

Minton's Playhouse: Statement of Historic Significance

Minton's Playhouse, located in the ground floor of the Cecil Hotel in Harlem, is significant in the history of American music for its role in the development of jazz during the 1940s. Recognized by musicians and historians as one of the foremost jam session nightclubs in the United States, Minton's is famed especially as the principal site of the formal and informal experimentations during the 1940s that led to the "bebop revolution," a transformation of the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic basis of jazz composition and improvisation that ushered in a distinctly sophisticated and virtuosic approach to jazz music.¹

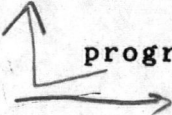
Throughout the 1940s, regular communal jam sessions were held at Minton's that became popular with professional musicians who were employed at the numerous clubs, theaters, and dance halls that thrived in New York during the period. Such jam sessions were basic to the new developments in jazz, for they provided an opportunity for extended experimental improvisations in a responsive and challenging setting. Those held at Minton's in the 1940s attracted the acknowledged masters as well as the progressive innovators in this generation of jazz musicians.

Jazz is a distinctive and uniquely American contribution to the creative arts of the world. The music historian and composer-pianist Billy Taylor holds that it is "America's classical music," and he further states:

As a musical language, it has developed steadily from a simple expression of the consciousness of black people to a

add summary of context for the hotel

summary



+ insert history of Minton's Club + insert B...

national music which expresses Americana to Americans as well as to people from other countries. As a classical music with its own standards of form, complexity, literacy, and excellence, jazz has been a major influence on the music of the world for more than eighty years...²

An extensive description of the nature of jazz rests beyond the bounds of this brief historical report; and, as Max Harrison has written in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, the standard musicological encyclopedia, "Attempts at a concise--even a coherent--definition of jazz have invariably failed."³ From a historical point of view, it can be said that there has been a progression of distinctive styles--identifiable by their special harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic characteristics, as well as compositional and performance natures--known as jazz. These various styles arose in specific eras, though many of them (or elements of many of them) continue to the present as vital and viable forms of musical expression. The dominant jazz styles of the 1930s and 1940s, styles with many notable performers to the present, were swing and bebop (or bop), bebop having developed from swing in the 1940s.

NOTE ON RELATIONSHIP

The eminent French musicologist Andre Hodeir considers bebop to be

...a modernist movement in jazz which had a deep influence on the genre's history. It developed during World War II as musicians like Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Christian, and later Charlie Parker experimented with the principal elements of the new style in a series of remarkable 'jam sessions' at Minton's, a night club in Harlem, New York.⁴

Hodeir goes on to describe the elements of the style developed by the pioneers at Minton's:

Among other innovations they superimposed melodic lines closer to the spirit of jazz on the harmonic structure of 'standard' songs, creating a new repertory on which to base their improvisation. The improvisation became more searching than hitherto, and the speed of harmonic, rhythmic and melodic motion led to dense, compact performances. Instrumental sonority (without vibrato) became more tense and mobile. The rhythm section was thinned out, the guitar disappeared, and the pianist spaced his accompanying chords more irregularly; the drummer explored the tension between a permanent beat on the symbol (supported by a walking bass) and syncopated strokes divided among the snare, tom-tom and bass drums, often interacting closely with the implied polyrhythms of the solo line. The range of tempos became wider, with a tendency to the extremely fast (at times exceeding 360 crotchets per minute); this is partly why bop was thought to be a style for virtuosos...⁵

Musicologists have asserted that bebop is deeply rooted in the historical continuum of jazz, despite its seemingly revolutionary departures. As Max Harrison wrote:

In fact many of the innovations of bop, or 'rebop' or 'bebop,' as the jazz of the immediate postwar period was called, had been pioneered not only by advanced swing players like Art Tatum and Coleman Hawkins but also by the New York school of the late 1920s and by Beiderbecke. The rhythmic subdivisions of bop that often turned it into 8/8 rather than 4/4 had been anticipated in ragtime performances like James Europe's Down Home Rag (...1913).... Even bop's extensions of executive technique, particularly in terms of mobility, had precedents, as may be heard by setting Dizzy Gillespie's virtuoso Be Bop (...1945) beside the equally accomplished Heckler's Hop of Roy Eldridge (...1937) and Till Times Get Better by Jabbo Smith (...1929)....

However, bop musicians generally, and [Charlie] Parker especially, did increase the expressivity in jazz improvisation; they used more chromatic and convoluted melodic lines which implied a greater number and variety of passing harmonies, and polyrhythms which, in their soloists' close partnerships with the drummers, arose from a constant shifting of the accent within small note values.⁶

While elements of bebop were presaged by the work of certain individual players across the country,⁷ Minton's Playhouse was a focus for its mature development: it was a place

where these diverse elements coalesced into a coherent musical style. A converted dining room in the Cecil Hotel, the nightclub was established in late 1939 by Henry Minton, a saxophonist and respected community leader who, as first black delegate to Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians, played a significant role in the integration of the union, helping to professionalize the status of black musicians. Henry Minton hired a fellow Masonic Lodge member (from Harlem's "Musicians' Lodge"), the pioneer tenor saxophonist Albert "Happy" Caldwell, to form a house band. In the fall of 1940, Minton brought in the veteran bandleader Teddy Hill to manage the playhouse, after Hill had been forced by economic difficulties to dissolve his well-known dance band. In turn, Hill--sympathetic to the new ideas of young musicians--hired Kenny Clarke to lead a new house band at the club.

CLM
insert club context + bldg. history for the hotel
 Clarke is credited (in the words of the historian of jazz Martin Williams) as the man "who virtually invented modern jazz drumming."⁸ In his younger years, his innovative rhythmic conceptions led to dismissal from several large bands (including Teddy Hill's), for some older musicians simply refused to play with him. At Minton's, he was free to gather around him kindred musical spirits (Thelonious Monk, piano; Nick Fenton, bass; Joe Guy, trumpet), and in this unconstrained setting, playing seven nights a week, he continued to develop his pioneering and profoundly influential style and technique.

*more
 TRW
 BOBOP?*

According to Clarke (in a rare interview granted some six months before his ^{demise} January 1985 death), his intention was to establish a strong rhythm section (piano, bass, and drums) so that guest soloists would join them regularly. Almost immediately, the trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (a compatriot from the Teddy Hill band) joined Clarke's group on an informal basis, following his work at the Savoy Ballroom and other such commercial venues. When in New York, the pioneer electric guitarist Charlie Christian also would drop by after his evening's performances with the Benny Goodman Orchestra, so often in fact that Teddy Hill bought an amplifier and set it permanently on the stage for him. According to Clarke, it was at Minton's, influencing and being influenced by these innovative musicians, that his pioneering conceptions reached maturity.⁹

The jam sessions at Minton's Playhouse became a forum for new musical ideas, and the collaborations of the core group of Clarke, Monk, Gillespie, and Christian (with Charlie Parker joining them occasionally at Minton's) were fundamentally significant in the forging of a new style and conception that changed the course of jazz. This music, now known as "bop" or "bebop," was called by many of the musicians in the pre-war years "that music they're playing up at Minton's."¹⁰

These developments achieved mature expression through regular communal jam sessions, as well as occasional afternoon meetings at which the nucleus of the Minton's musicians would study harmony together and work out new chord progressions

to familiar melodies. While a few other sites in Harlem, for the most part brief-lived such as Clarke Monroe's Uptown House, also were intermittently important centers in the early 1940s, Minton's especially became known as the place where progressive musicians from diverse locales throughout the nation--Kansas City, Albuquerque, Baltimore, South Carolina farm towns, etc.--met to forge a new musical vocabulary. As the musicologist Leroy Ostransky has pointed out: "Minton's was unique as the place where at the time jazzmen were able to focus their attention on each other's experiments."¹¹

Dan Morgenstern (director of the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University) focuses specifically on the development of bebop as the source of Minton's fame:

Minton's was by no means the only after-hours jazz oasis in Harlem in 1941-1942; Charlie Parker, for instance, frequented Monroe's Uptown House. It has become the most famous because...[four musicians] were fixtures of the place; two as members of the houseband, the others as frequent sitters-in. The former, of course, were Thelonious Monk and Kenny Clarke; the latter Charlie Christian and Dizzy Gillespie. Because they played together so often, they were able to establish certain rhythmic and harmonic patterns which later were expanded into the basic formulae of bop.¹²

The jam sessions were basic to these new developments in jazz, for they provided an opportunity for extended experimental improvisations in a musically responsive and challenging setting. At Minton's, big band musicians were freed from the constraints of playing a few commercially acceptable eight- or sixteen-bar solos in the course of an evening's dance music at the Cotton Club, the Savoy Ballroom, or at society affairs. In-

stead, they were concerned at Minton's with the challenging demands of their colleagues.

IMPACT OF THIS FOLLOWS: "GOLDEN YEARS?"

The unique nature of Minton's--as a jam session center for almost all the great jazz musicians of the age--was possible due to the special circumstances of New York and Harlem. In the 1930s and especially in the 1940s (continuing on to the 1950s), numerous clubs, theaters, and dance halls throughout New York provided exceptional opportunities for musicians to gain employment. Thus, New York became a center for many of the finest professional musicians of the nation, and those in the best known touring bands inevitably performed in there during the course of a year. Harlem nightclubs, such as Minton's, stayed open later than the downtown sites, so when musicians wanted to relax after an evening of entertaining others, they often went to clubs in Harlem, where many of them lived. Minton's Playhouse was one such club, known for its unpretentious atmosphere and its good food (an important consideration for a traveling musician).¹³

Why last down ENA?

Within a few years of its opening, Minton's was known by musicians throughout the country as the serious meeting place of both progressive innovators and the established masters of earlier styles. For example, in 1944 the pianist and jazz educator Billy Taylor came as a young and hopeful musician to New York from Washington, D. C. with the intention of living as close to Minton's as possible. Dr. Taylor recalls:

THE PLACE TO GO IN THE 40'S

Everybody knew about Minton's, all the young musicians, because that was a legendary place already. Teddy Hill had been a famous bandleader--he was the manager; Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Lester Young--all the

great artists went there to jam. All over the country it was known that this was one of the places where you could go and, whether you were lucky enough to sit in there or not, at least you could hear the legendary musicians jamming with one another. The opportunities to do that in any other town were relatively limited.

...People would come from all over, from out of town, from out of the country, because musicians talked about it. They'd say, "Where do you go to jam in New York? You go to Minton's."¹⁴

Minton's became this special center in good part due to the efforts and support of the manager, Teddy Hill, who made the club an economic haven for musicians whose innovative conceptions made it difficult for them to find work elsewhere. Musicians of the time are emphatic in their recognition of Hill's significant support. For example, Kenny Clarke states:

Teddy was a saxophone player, and he knew what we were trying to do. He gave us a good hand. No one else would've given us that much rein.¹⁵

And Billy Taylor adds:

I think that Teddy Hill was as concerned about musicians' needs--financially and the need to get their music together--as he was about style. I don't think he had any particular brief for bebop per se. He was not a bebop band leader, but he just felt that the new music deserved a place to get itself together, and some of the older musicians who were transitional figures needed a place to work, and some of the guys that couldn't easily get jobs in other places could find a place to enter work as a sideman or sometimes as a leader.¹⁶

An additional economic factor was significant in the establishment of Minton's as a long-lasting center for jam sessions. Difficulties arose for many clubs in Harlem featuring jam sessions, since the musicians' union would not permit its members to play without pay, and the union sought to enforce this rule vigorously. Dizzy Gillespie relates: "There were big fines

for playing jam sessions, and the union had 'walking delegates' who would check on all the places that were frequented by jazz musicians. So we were taking a big risk." While the fines could be as high as five hundred dollars, "we were somewhat immune from this at Minton's because Henry Minton, who owned the place, was the first 'colored' union delegate in New York."¹⁷

Entertainment at Minton's in the 1940s went from ten until four, seven nights a week. From all accounts, in this period of significance, the evenings were loosely structured.

40's
PERIOD
OF SIGN.

Kenny Clarke recalls:

After we played a set or two, fellows would start drifting in, wanting to play.... We invited anyone who understood what we were doing to come up and play.¹⁸

Mondays were reserved for informal playing; to ensure a steady round of guest celebrities, on Mondays Teddy Hill would provide a hash-and-biscuit dinner for all the performers currently appearing at the Apollo Theatre (NR listed), in the 1940s as well as in other decades the premier center for black entertainment.¹⁹

IMPORTANT
BLACK ENT.
CENTER.

In recalling the musical excitement of Minton's in the 1940s, Billy Taylor states that often the session would be in full gear at the official closing hour of four, so the front door would be locked, and the musicians would continue playing until five or six in the morning.²⁰ The various records culled from Columbia undergraduate Jerry Newman's 1941 direct-disc recordings at Minton's preserve this sense of excitement and reveal the nascent elements of bebop as they were explored at that time, as

well as the diversity of styles (and abilities) of Minton's musicians.²¹

The flavor of an early jam session is captured in a large mural over the bandstand completed in 1948 by the Harlem artist Charles Graham. In addition to an unidentified musician beating out a rhythm with whisk brooms, Graham depicts Minton's stalwarts Charlie Christian, the trumpeter Hot Lips Page, and the clarinetist Tony Scott (see attached photo). It is important to note that while most of the musicians and patrons of the club were black, white musicians such as Scott (who eventually led the house band in 1953-1954), Dick Katz, John Carisi, Remo Palmieri, Bill Evans, and numerous others were welcomed there.

While Minton's is famous among musicians and historians as the site of the bebop revolution in the 1940s, the club had a vital existence through the early 1960s as a jam session center, with intermittent operation until 1974, when a fire led to the abandonment of the Cecil Hotel by its owner. An indication of its vitality in the 1950s is provided by Dick Katz, house pianist at the playhouse with the Tony Scott Quartet in 1953-1954, who recalls that his opening night included--in addition to instrumental numbers by the quartet--a shake dancer, the master tap dancer "Baby" Lawrence, and a young singer named Carmen McRae.²²

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the manager Teddy Hill sought to raise the quality of music by bringing some order to the jam sessions. Tenor saxophonist Eddie Lockjaw Davis, then leading the house band, was given new responsibilities:

That particular policeman's job, as I call it, was handed to me by Teddy Hill, who was manager at the time. One night he announced to me that he couldn't manage the club and the bandstand at the same time, and that he felt whoever was the leader should be responsible for who played and who didn't. That became a sticky job.... In some instances I was labeled as a tyrant, but on the whole the guys appreciated it. The word spread. If you can't play, don't go on Lockjaw's thing, because he'll ask you off. In doing that, we got the best musicians. It was most relaxed. You had a chance to hear different stylists, different musicians. It was a big classroom, and it was pleasant. It was a place to experiment with what you knew.²³

Music from Minton's in the early 1950s and early 1960s has been preserved in recordings. The first long-playing record made at the playhouse, released on Brunswick and now an out-of-print collector's item, features the Tony Scott Quartet in 1953 (Music After Midnight). A series of four albums, all recorded on 6 January 1961, features the two-tenor chases of Eddie Lockjaw Davis and Johnny Griffin; some of the jazz standards played on these four records were composed by the Minton's bebop innovators Kenny Clarke, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk.²⁴ All these recordings capture the special ambience of the place, relaxed yet musically serious, that contributed to the club's fame.

As outlined above, musicians who played regularly at Minton's during its period of special historical significance, the 1940s, speak of their experiences as formative: for many, Minton's was the place where--due to unique conditions conducive to musical freedom and growth--they truly developed their ideas and abilities, leading to the coalescence and codification of a distinctive new style that continues to be a fundamentally significant force in contemporary music. The musicians' percep-

NDRE ?

tions of the historical importance of their experiences at Minton's is echoed in the more formal analyses of the most respected musicologists specializing in jazz studies, as quoted above. They hold that the vitality of American jazz was significantly nurtured and enhanced by the free exchange of musical ideas at Minton's in the 1940s. The events that occurred at Minton's Playhouse (what historians now consider meetings of musical giants) and the music created there (a small fraction of which has been recorded, but which clearly played an important role in transforming the course of jazz) are--in a fundamental way--exceptionally significant to the history of American music.

NOTES

1. This view is shared both by historians and musicians. See as examples among standard historical works: Ira Gitler, Jazz Masters of the Forties (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 69; Martin Williams, The Jazz Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 156; Frank Tirro, Jazz: A History (New York: W., W. Norton, 1977), pp. 243 ff. For statements by noted musicians, see as examples: Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, To Be or Not to Bop: Memoirs--Dizzy Gillespie (New York: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 134-151; Hampton Hawes and Don Asher, Raise Up Off Me: A Portrait of Hampton Hawes (New York: Da Capo, 1979), p. 20.
2. Billy Taylor, Jazz Piano: A Jazz History (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1982), p. 3.
3. Max Harrison, "Jazz," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 9, p. 561.
4. Andre Hodeir, "Bop," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 3, p. 41. My emphasis.
5. Ibid.
6. Max Harrison, "Jazz," in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 9, p. 573.
7. See Gitler's Jazz Masters of the Forties for extended discussion throughout the book on the origins of bebop.
8. See Martin Williams, The Jazz Tradition, p. 206. This view is widely held. See also: Gitler, Jazz Masters of the Forties, pp. 174-183; Tirro, Jazz: A History, p. 276; Leroy Ostransky, Understanding Jazz (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 214; Nathan Davis, Writings on Jazz (Dubuque, Iowa: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1978), p. 97.
9. Taped interview with Kenny Clarke, 1 July 1984, New York City.
10. According to Kenny Clarke, as quoted by Arthur Taylor, Notes and Tones: Musician to Musician Interviews (New York: Perigee, 1982), p. 194.

11. Ostransky, Understanding Jazz, p. 202.
12. Dan Morgenstern, liner notes to Trumpet Battle at Minton's, Xanadu 107, 1975.
13. Extensive historical description of Minton's within the Harlem scene of the 1940s, as well as personal reminiscences, are included in a taped interview with Billy Taylor, 7 July 1984, New York City.
14. Taylor interview.
15. Clarke interview.
16. Taylor interview.
17. Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, To Be or Not to Bop, pp. 139-140.
18. Clarke interview.
19. Kenny Clarke, Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project Transcription (30 September 1977), vol. 1, p. 103.
20. Taylor interview.
21. Such records still in print include: Don Byas, Live at Minton's, Jazz Anthology 5121; Charlie Christian, Live Sessions at Minton's (originally issued as The Men from Minton's), Jazz Anthology 5122; Joe Guy and Hot Lips Page, Trumpet Battle at Minton's, Xanadu 107.
22. Taped interview with Dick Katz, 6 July 1984, New York City.
23. Eddie Lockjaw Davis, quoted in Arthur Taylor, Notes and Tones, pp. 84-85.
24. Two of these albums still are in print: The First Set/Recorded Live at Minton's, Prestige 7309; and The Late Show/Recorded Live at Minton's, Prestige 7357.

Selected Bibliography: Principal Sources on Minton's
and its Context

Anderson, Jervis. This Was Harlem: A Cultural
Portrait, 1900-1950. New York: 1982.

Charters, Samuel and Kunstadt, Leonard. Jazz: A
History of the New York Scene. New York: 1962.

Davis, Nathan. Writings in Jazz. Dubuque, Iowa: 1978.

Driggs, Frank and Lewine, Harris. Black Beauty, White
Heat: A Pictorial History of Classic Jazz. New York:
1982.

Ellison, Ralph. "The Birth of Bebop," Esquire
Magazine, August, 1951.

Gillespie, Dizzy with Fraser, Al. To Be or Not to Bop:
Memoirs. New York: 1979.

Gitler, Ira. Jazz Masters of the Forties. New York:
1966.

Harrison, Max, "Jazz," in The New Grove Dictionary
of Music and Musicians, Vol. 9. London: 1980

Hawes, Hampton and Don Asker, Raise Up Off Me: A
Portrait of Hampton Hawes. New York: 1979.

Hodeir, Andre, "Bop," in The New Grove Dictionary
of Music and Musicians, Vol. 3. London: 1980.

Jazz Oral History Project (Smithsonian Institution):
Interview Transcripts

Kenny Clarke. 30 September 1977, Paris
(4 volumes).

Happy Caldwell. May 1976, Washington, D.C.
(1 volume).

Lewis, David Levering. When Harlem Was in Vogue. New
York: 1981.

Morgenstern, Dan. Liner Notes to Trumpet Battle at
Minton's, Xanadu 107, 1975.

Ostransky, Leroy. Understanding Jazz. Englewood Cliffs:
1977.

Taylor, Arthur. Notes and Tones: Musician to Musician
Interviews. New York: 1982

Taylor, Billy. Jazz Piano: A Jazz History. Dubuque, Iowa: 1982.

Tirro, Frank. Jazz: A History. New York: 1977.

Ullman, Michael. Jazz Lives: Portraits in Words and Pictures. New York: 1980.

Williams, Martin. The Jazz Tradition. Oxford: 1983.

Interviews

Kenny Clarke (Drummer and leader of house band at Minton's 1940-1943 and intermittently through the mid-1950's), 1 July 1984, New York (taped).

Dick Katz (House pianist at Minton's, 1953-1954), 6 July 1984, New York (taped).

Ray McKethan (Harlem folklorist), 30 June 1984, New York.

Phil Schaap (Jazz historian and broadcaster), 8 July 1984, New York.

Billy Taylor (Pianist who played at Minton's in the 1940's and 1950's, jazz historian/educator), 7 July 1984, New York (taped).

A Brief List of Musicians Known to Have Played at
Minton's Playhouse

Art Blakey	Illinois Jacquet
Don Byas	Budd Johnson
Albert Happy Caldwell	Philly Joe Jones
John Carisi	Tiny Kahn
Betty Carter	Dick Katz
Big Sid Catlett	Don Lamond
Charlie Christian	Carmen McRae
Kenny Clarke	Junior Mance
Eddie Lockjaw Davis	Thelonious Monk
Roy Eldridge	Fats Navarro
Bill Evans	Hot Lips Page
Nick Fenton	Remo Palmieri
Herbie Fields	Charlie Parker
Larry Gales	Bud Powell
Dizzy Gillespie	Ben Riley
Benny Goodman	Max Roach
Johnny Griffin	Kermit Scott
Joe Guy	Tony Scott
Al Haig	Art Tatum
Coleman Hawkins	Billy Taylor
Earl Hines	Sarah Vaughan
Milt Hinton	Wilbur Ware
Ben Webster	

THEME: IF MUSIC OF THE 1940'S? → CONTEXT = ALL OF 40'S MUSIC
IF JAZZ? → CONTEXT = ALL OF JAZZ HISTORY.
IF BLACK CULTURE? → (SWING 30'S - BEE BOP 40'S - ??)
IF POST WAR CULTURE? → CONTEXT = ALL OF POST WAR CULTURE
WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF BEE BOP? → BLACK CULTURE.

SWING → BEE BOP → WHAT NEXT?
ROLE OF BLACKS.

IMP. DIRECTION MUSIC TOOK AS A RESULT.

THIS IS WHAT IS IMP. IN MUSIC HISTORY. → OF THESE
THESE HAPPENED HERE

EX. MUSIC TRAINING.

MOROSCO THEATER.
(CRITICS?)
(AWARDS?)
BEE BOP TO RESTRICTIVE.
(OUTSTANDING
INDIV.)

WHAT OTHER JAZZ CENTERS, BESIDES HARLEM?

1'

FIELD REPORT

OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PROJECT:

CONTACT:

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

REPORT:

DATE:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

WASO-11
Revised (7-83)

ROUTING SLIP

(Indicate routing order by number - strike out office when cleared)

ORG. CODE	OFFICE TITLE	ORG. CODE	OFFICE TITLE
001	DIRECTOR	470	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCES
	ASST. TO THE DIRECTOR	475	Air and Water Quality Division
	ASST. TO THE DIRECTOR (Tourism)	480	Energy, Mining & Minerals Division*
	ASST. TO THE DIRECTOR (Urban Affairs)	485	Biological Resources Division*
002	DEPUTY DIRECTOR	498	Special Science Projects Division*
	ASST. TO THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR	500	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK OPERATIONS
005	OFFICE OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	501	Environmental Sanitation Officer*
010	BUREAU EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICER	610	Engineering & Safety Services Division*
022	SPECIAL ASST. POLICY DEVELOPMENT	650	Visitor Services Division
040	OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS	680	Concessions Division*
170	LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS	760	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
180	Legislation	762	Environmental Compliance Division
190	Congressional Liaison	763	Park Planning & Special Studies Division
200	ASST. DIRECTOR, PERSONNEL & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	765	Recreation Resources Assistance Division*
230	Administrative Services Division*	767	Land Resources Division*
240	Personnel Division	770	Cooperative Activities Division*
260	WASO Personnel Branch	775	Recreation Grants Division*
280	Training Division*		FIELD OFFICES
	Albright Training Center	1100	Harpers Ferry Center (HFC)
	Mather Training Center	1200	Rocky Mountain Region (RMR)
300	ASST. DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL & DATA SYSTEMS	1600	North Atlantic Region (NAR)
310	Finance Division*	2000	Denver Service Center (DSC)
330	Budget Division	3000	National Capital Region (NCR)
350	Data Systems Division*	4000	Mid-Atlantic Region (MAR)
400	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES	5000	Southeast Region (SER)
410	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	6000	Midwest Region (MWR)
413	Intergency Resources Division*	7000	Southwest Region (SWR)
418	History Division*	8000	Western Region (WR)
420	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCE ASSISTANCE	9000	Pacific Northwest Region (PNWR)
422	Park Historic Architecture Division*	9700	Alaska Region (AR)
424	Preservation Assistance Division*		CENTRAL FILES _____
429	HABS/HAER Division*		MAIL ROOM _____
430	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ARCHEOLOGY		
434	Anthropology Division*		
436	Archeological Assistance Division*		

REMARKS:

Less than 50 year old nominations. Return to 413.
 Sign on page with signature tag
 I am accustomed to that practice. would be grateful if you would assure that tags are affixed at the appropriate places on all materials you send here for signature.
 Carl Shull 9-17-85

SIGNATURE

DATE

(* - Denotes L Street Building)