

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received JUN 23 1983
date entered

1. Name

historic Puck Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number ²⁹⁵⁻⁻³⁰⁹ ~~295-309~~ Lafayette Street ___ not for publicationcity, town New York ___ vicinity of

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Peter Gee and Paul Serra

street & number 295-309 Lafayette Street

city, town New York ___ vicinity of state New York

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Register's Office Surrogates Court/Hall of Records

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N.Y.C. Landmarks Preservation Comm. LP-1226
has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ☒ nodate April 12, 1983 ___ federal ___ state ___ county ☒ local

depository for survey records New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 20 Vesey Street

city, town New York state New York

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved

date

NA

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Puck Building, prominently sited at the juncture of East Houston Street and Lafayette and Mulberry Streets, is a composite seven- and nine-story building constructed of red brick and trimmed with granite, brownstone, terra cotta, and iron (see photos 1-2). Although built in three stages, the building exhibits a unified design composed of arcades that are twelve bays long on the virtually identical Mulberry Street and Lafayette Street fronts, and three bays long on Houston Street. These arcades, which are arranged in horizontal tiers, give the building its distinctive character.

Each bay of the Puck Building is virtually identical. The only exceptions to this are the nine-story bays which have an added arcade and the main entrance in the sixth bay (counting from Houston Street) of the Lafayette Street elevation which has a monumental entrance portico. The bays are divided horizontally with a full-width two-story arch at the base. Above this arch is a pair of narrower two-story arches which are surmounted by three narrow three-story arches. The bays are separated by full height brick piers set on granite bases. Each pier is articulated with brick banding and ornamented with highly decorative iron tie rods. Narrow banded piers separate the arches within the upper tiers. Each arch is marked by corbelled brick voussoirs.

The wide base arches are divided into six sections by horizontal and vertical cast-iron members. On the ground floor, several of the bays contain secondary entrances reached by iron stairs. Iron and glass light vaults line the sidewalks in front of these entrances. The first and second arcades are separated by a band composed of recessed corbelled brick panels. Larger panels separate the floors within the upper arches, while raised brick panels separate the second and third arcades. Above the third tier of arcades is a wide corbelled brick cornice. This corbelling continues across the taller section, separating the third and fourth arcades. A similar cornice crowns this section. A brick parapet once ran along the roofline of the entire building; it survives only on the nine-story wing.

All of the corners of the building are beveled for special emphasis. The Houston and Mulberry Street corner is of particular interest since the original main entrances were located here (see photo 1). Paired arched entries were set within the first floor of each corner bay, but they were removed in 1899 when the main entrance was moved to Lafayette Street. This corner still retains a two-story brick column with a bulbous brownstone capital on which stands a figure of Puck (see photo 3). A flagstaff in the form of a carved bracket with a monstrous face is set between the sixth and seventh floors. Also of note are two curvaceous wrought-iron fire escapes that extend up the Mulberry Street elevation.

The main entrance on Lafayette Street is in the form of a triumphal arch with paired polished granite columns and pilasters raised on granite bases. These columns flank a round-arched entrance that continues the form of the ground-floor arcade. The columns support an entablature with a frieze inscribed "PUCK BUILDING" and embellished with lion's heads, rosettes, and a balustrade. Within the entrance arch are two pairs of ornate wrought-iron gates, complex iron screens, and a second Puck statue.

(see continuation sheet)

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

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

Page 2

The rear elevation on Jersey Street (see photo 4) is faced with common brick and is articulated by simple round-arched, segmental-arched, and trabeated windows with iron shutters.

The interior retains much of its original form including large open spaces "flooded with light from [the] large windows,"¹ wooden wainscot, and cast-iron stairways and columns (see photo 5). Although some of the columns are of the simple Tuscan order, most are more complex, with bands, bosses, fluting, and rosettes arranged in various patterns. The building also retains its original elevator shaft with its delicate wrought and cast ironwork (see photo 6).

Having recently been restored, the building is in excellent condition. One floor has been divided into small spaces, but the remainder retains both the look and feel of a late nineteenth century industrial building.

¹Puck 21(March 2, 1877), Supplement, p.3.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1885–86, 1892–93, 1899 **Builder/Architect** Albert Wagner, Herman Wagner

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Puck Building, with its magnificently massed round-arched arcades and sculpted figures of its namesake, is one of the architectural masterpieces in America's late nineteenth-century publishing center. It is among the finest industrial structures in New York City to combine the arcaded massing of Italian Renaissance architecture with the heavy earth-toned forms of the American Romanesque Revival. The building was originally built in 1885–86, enlarged in 1892–93, and dramatically restructured in 1899, but it still retains a unity of design. It was erected to house the magazine Puck, one of America's foremost humor magazines, and the J. Ottman Lithographing Co., once the country's largest lithographers and the company responsible for printing Puck's famous chromolithographic cartoons.

The extremely successful Puck magazine was founded in 1876 by Joseph Keppler (1838–1894). Keppler was born near Vienna and as a young man studied art at a Viennese academy and drew cartoons for the Vienna Humor magazine Kikeriki (The Rooster).¹ In 1868 Keppler emigrated, following his father to Missouri. The following year he settled in St. Louis where he founded the weekly German-language humor magazine Die Vehme (The Star Chamber), the first American satiric magazine to use lithographic illustrations.² Die Vehme soon failed, but in 1871 Keppler founded Puck, Illustrierte Wochenschrift (Puck, An Illustrated Weekly). After the failure of this publication in 1872 Keppler moved to New York where he worked for Frank Leslie, creating woodcuts for Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper.³ In 1876 Keppler entered a partnership with Adolph Schwartzmann, the foreman of the print shop at Leslie's, and they began printing a German-language magazine known as Puck, Humoristisches Wochenblatt (Puck, A Humorous Weekly). This magazine featured satiric lithographic cartoons drawn by Keppler.

Keppler was soon persuaded that an English-language edition of Puck would be a success and on March 14,⁴ 1877 he printed the first English issue; the magazine would run for forty-one years. The first issue typified the style for which Puck became famous. It was a sixteen-page publication with full-page color cartoons on the first and last pages and a double-page cartoon in the center. The early cartoons were limited in their coloration, but by 1879 the cartoons were chromolithographed, which "produced the brilliant, overcolored, slashing pictures, clearly of the German school, which came to be characteristic of Puck."⁵ Many of the cartoons were drawn by Keppler, while others were the work of a small group of German-born artists. A substantial number of the cartoons were political in nature, condemning corruption and incompetence. The magazine attempted to be impartial, denouncing corruption in all ranks of government and in all political parties. On Puck's fifth anniversary an editorial written by editor H.C. Brunner noted the purpose of the magazine:

The want [at the time Puck was begun] was the want of a journal bound to no party, to no sect or clique of people, that should say the truths that every day cry

(see continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Brooklyn

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

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

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification The Puck Building encompasses the entire square block (block no. 510, lot 45) bounded by Houston Street on the north, Jersey Street on the south, Mulberry Street on the east, and Lafayette Street on the west.
See attached map.

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 Larry E. Gobrecht

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

street & number Empire State Plaza Agency Building No. 1 telephone (518)-474-0479

city or town Albany state New York 12238

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Albert E. Cassese

title Deputy Commissioner and Counsel

date 6/13/83

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 7/21/83

for *Delores Byers*
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet Puck Building New York, N.Y. Item number 8Page 2

to be said in a way that would reach the ears of the public--the great, hard-working, wearied public, that has not time to read the ponderous dissertations of theorists, or to sift for itself the grain of truth out of the chaff of partisan dissension.

In reality, Puck generally supported the Democrats and its campaign to discredit Republican James Blaine is believed to have had a major effect on his loss to Grover Cleveland in the presidential election of 1884.⁷

Puck's message was rarely subtle and when it chose an issue to satirize, it was unrelenting in its ridicule. A contemporary magazine, The Critic, accurately described the content of Puck's cartoons when it wrote in 1886 that, "It is not refined humor that makes Puck a commercial success and a political power: it is the coarse strength of its cartoons, which thus far have been drawn almost uniformly in the interests of popular morality and political integrity."⁸

Puck's lithographic cartoons were published by Jacob Ottman whose firm grew along with the magazine until it was the "largest and foremost on the American continent."⁹ Puck's chromolithographs were printed in five colors but, due to the demands of weekly publication, they were printed in haste, and thus were not J. Ottman Lithography Company's finest work. The firm was widely respected for its reproductions of oil paintings and water colors done "with such fidelity to the originals as to bewilder the uninitiated observer."¹⁰

Both the magazine and the printing firm were located on Warren Street near City Hall until 1885 when they moved into the new Puck Building, which had been erected as a joint venture by Keppler, Schwartzmann, and Ottman. As originally built, the Puck Building was a brick and granite structure designed in 1884 by Albert Wagner on the southwest corner of Houston and Mulberry Streets,¹¹ the southern edge of the area that by the late nineteenth century had become the center of New York's (and America's) printing industry.¹²

Albert Wagner (d.1898) is a relatively obscure figure. Born in Germany, Wagner came to the United States in 1871 and worked for Alfred B. Mullett, in the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, and for Leopold Eidlitz before opening his own office in about 1880.¹³ Wagner designed a variety of structures, but the Puck building seems to have been his major commission. The original building was a "snug little affair of seven stories"¹⁴ with a pair of corner entrances--one for Puck, which had offices on the upper floors, and one for Ottman, whose firm was located on the ground floor. The original entrance corner is emphatically marked by a terracotta flagstaff and a large cast-metal statue of Puck carrying a pen ("the pen is mightier than the sword") and a mirror. The statue was designed by Casper Buberl, a specialist in architectural sculpture. Buberl's best-known work is the frieze that surrounds the Pension Building in Washington, D.C. (1882).¹⁵

As a result of the continuing growth of both Puck and the Ottman firm, Wagner was commissioned to design an extension that stretched along Mulberry Street to Jersey

(continued)

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Page 3

Street. Begun in 1892 and completed in 1893, this nine-story addition almost doubled the length of the building. In 1899 the entire west side of the structure had to be redesigned when the city opened Lafayette Street (once a cul-de-sac stretching three blocks south from Astor Place) from Great Jones Street to Chambers Street. This led to the demolition of the two western bays of the building's Houston Street facade. The west wall, which once faced the middle of the block became a major street elevation. Herman Wagner, a relative of the deceased Albert Wagner, designed the new Lafayette Street frontage, adding a new main entrance on that street and rearranging some interior features. A second Puck statue, created by Henry Baerer, was placed over the new entrance. The 1899 work was accomplished with great fidelity to the original and today the building reads as a single unified design.

Stylistically the Puck Building is part of an arcaded style of design popular in New York that derives from Italian Renaissance architecture.¹⁶ Puck is among the most sophisticated of these building, combining the rhythmic arches of Quattrocento Italy with the dark chromatic tonality of the late nineteenth century American Romanesque Revival. Contemporary critics saw the building as Renaissance in its inspiration. Puck itself wrote in 1887 that the building's design adapted the "Italian Renaissance to the exigencies of modern business."¹⁷

After Puck ceased publication in 1918 the building retained its importance as a printing center; the massive structural supports easily withstood the weight of printing presses. In the early 1980s the building was restored and converted into commercial space for artists, architects, designers, and related professionals.

Footnotes

¹ L. Draper Hill, Jr., "What Fools These Mortals Be: A Study of the Work of Joseph Keppler--Founder of Puck." A.B. Thesis, Harvard College, 1957, p.7.

² Ibid., p.15.

³ Frank Leslie had a close link to the German-speaking community. In 1855, only two years after founding Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, Leslie began the publication of Frank Leslie's Illustrierte Zeitung.

⁴ For a detailed history of Puck see Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, Vol. 3 1865-1885. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957, pp. 520-534.

⁵ Mott, p. 522.

⁶ Puck, 11(March 8, 1882), 2.

⁷ Mott, p. 524.

⁸ The Critic, 8(January 9, 1886), 24. Misquoted in Mott, p. 525.

(continued)

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Page 4

⁹ Moses King, King's Handbook of New York City. Boston: Moses King, 1892, p.884.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ At the time the Puck Building was erected Houston Street was a narrow thoroughfare similar to those running parallel to it. The street was widened in the twentieth century.

¹² Among the many printing and publishing houses in the area were A.S. Barnes, Appleton's, The American Book Company, Dood, Mead & Co., J.J. Little, Scribner's, and the DeVinne Press (publishers of Scribner's, Century, and St. Nicholas magazines).

¹³ Sarah Bradford Landau, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Reconsidered: Arcaded Buildings of the New York School, c.1870-1890," in In Search of Modern Architecture: A Tribute to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, ed. by Helen Searing. New York: Architectural History Foundation and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982, p.154 and note 42, p.163.

¹⁴ Puck, 21(March 2, 1887), Supplement, p.2.

¹⁵ Buburl also designed the statue of Robert Fulton that once graced the facade of the Brooklyn terminal of the Fulton Ferry and now stands in Fulton Park in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn; "Columbia Protecting Science and Industry" (1881) atop the Arts and Industries Building of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.; and the Confederate Memorial (1889), Alexandria, Virginia.

¹⁶ Landau, pp.267-271.

¹⁷ Puck, 21(March 2, 1887), Supplement, p.8.

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Page 1

Kings Handbook of New York City. Boston: Moses King, 1893.

Landau, Sarah Bradford. "The Tall Office Building Artistically Reconsidered: Arcaded Buildings of the New York School, c.1870-1890," in In Search of Modern Architecture: A Tribute to Henry-Russell Hitchcock ed. by Helen Seering. New York: The Architectural History Foundation and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982, pp.136-164.

Mott, Frank Luther. A History of American Magazines, Vol. 3, 1865-1885. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1957.

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. Puck Building Designation Report. Report written by Lydia Latchinova, 1983.

"The Puck Building," Puck 21(March 2, 1887, Supplement).

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Continuation sheet Puck Building New York, N.Y. Item number 11

Page 2

Report written by:

Andrew Scott Dolkart/Architectural Consultant
201 West 92nd Street--Apt. 3F
New York, N.Y. 10025
(212)-877-2088

Report prepared for:

New York Landmarks Conservancy
330 West 42nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10036
(212)-736-7575

John Dyckman Lib 49 P.252 Lib 63 P.114 Lib 727 P.194

E. HOUSTON

22



Puck Building New York, N.Y. Co., New York
 From: Manhattan Land Book of the City of N.Y.
 Plate 19 (New York: Real Estate Data
 Inc., 1982).
 Scale= 1 inch:120 feet

295-309 Lafayette Sheet

EAST BAYARD

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Puck Building
New York County
NEW YORK

Working No. JUN 23 1983

Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84

Date Due: 7/21/83 - 8/7/83

Action: ☒ ACCEPT 7/21/83

REMOVED In the RETURN

National Register REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

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

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

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ altered
☐ fair	☐ unexposed	☐ original site
		☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____

Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*) _____

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Puck Building

No.1

New York, N.Y. Co, N.Y.

North and east elevations--view looking
southwest

Photo by Andrew S. Dolkart 1/83

Neg: N.Y. Landmarks Conservancy

330 West 42nd Street

New York, N.Y.



Puck Building

No.2

New York, N.Y. Co, N.Y.

West elevation--view looking northeast

Photo by Andrew S. Dolkart 1/83

Neg: N.Y. Landmarks Conservancy

330 West 42nd Street

New York, N.Y.



Puck Building

No.3

New York, N.Y. Co, N.Y.

Puck Statue--view looking southwest

Photo by Andrew S. Dolkart 1/83

Neg: N.Y. Landmarks Conservancy

330 West 42nd Street

New York, N.Y. 1



Puck Building

No. 4

New York, N.Y. Co, N.Y.

South elevation--view looking northwest

Photo by Andrew S. Dolkart 1/83

Neg: N.Y. Landmarks Conservancy

330 West 42nd Street

New York, N.Y.



Puck Building

No.5

New York, N.Y. Co, NY

Interior--first floor, view looking north

Photo by Andrew S. Dolkart 1/83

Neg: NY Landmarks Conservancy, 330 West
42nd Street New York, N.Y.



Puck Building

No. 6

New York, N.Y. Co, N.Y.

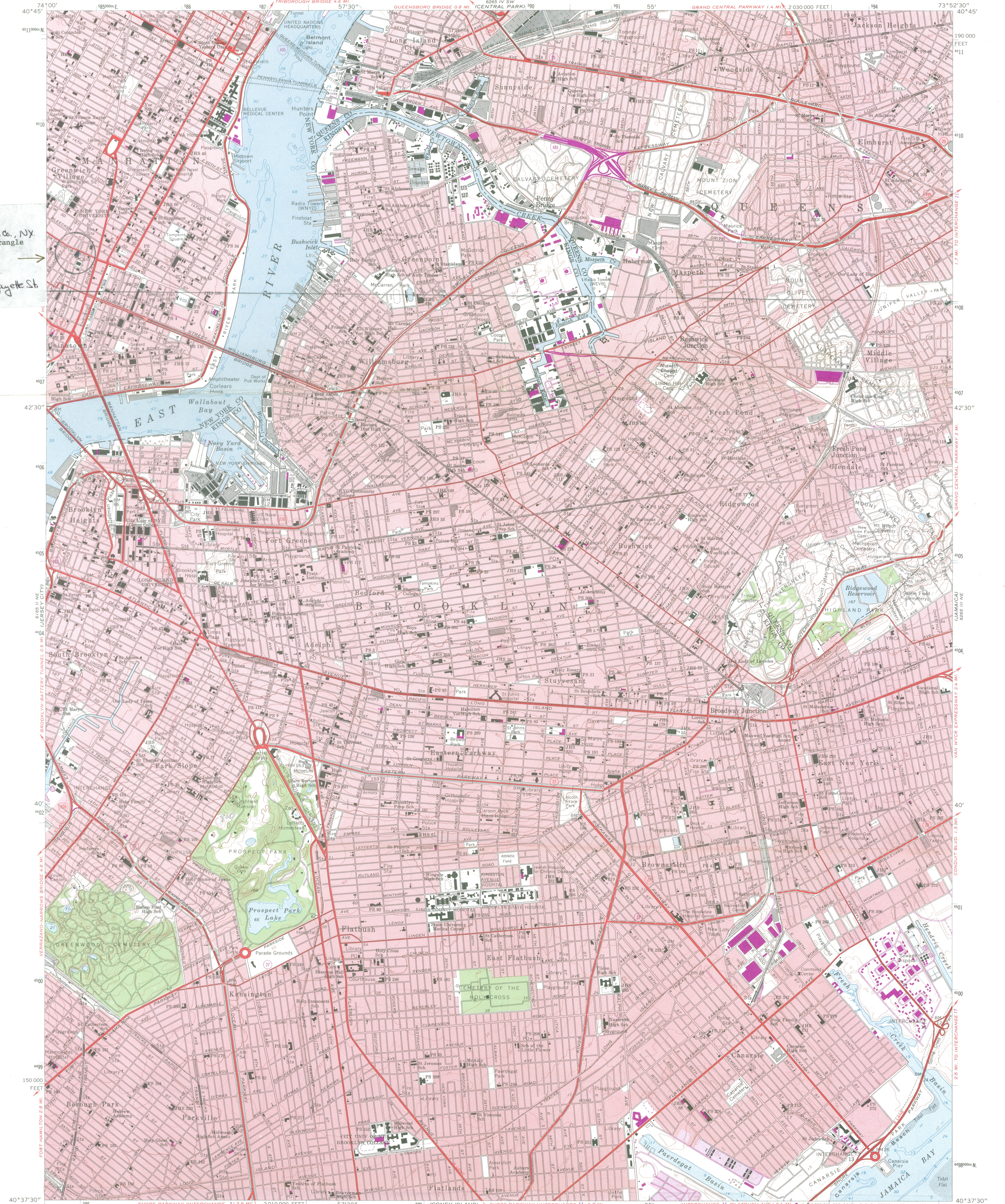
Elevator--fourth floor, view looking
northeast

Photo: Andrew S. Dolkart 1/83

Neg: N.Y. Landmarks Conservancy
330 West 42nd Street
New York, N.Y.



Puck Building
New York, N.Y. Co., NY
Brooklyn Quadrangle
Zone 18
East: 584790
North: 4508440
295-309 Lafayette St.

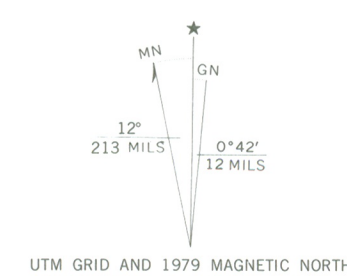


Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Revised in cooperation with New York Department of Transportation
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and City of New York Board of
Estimate and Apportionment

Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1954, and from USC&GS Charts T-5094, T-5335, T-5454
T-5459, T-5460, and T-8449

Topography by planimetric surveys 1955-1956. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts
275 (1964), 542 (1967), and 745 (1966). This information
is not intended for navigational purposes

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Entire area lies within New York City



SCALE 1:24,000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET-DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 4.2 FEET IN THE EAST RIVER
AND 5.2 FEET IN JAMAICA BAY



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

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

N4037.5-W7352.5/7.5

1967
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6265 III NW-SERIES V821

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST