UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

New York

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 2 9 1980

New York

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March, 1979	FEDERAL _	STATE _COUNTY _XOCAL	
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS New York City Landmar	ks Preservation Co	mmission	
CITY TOWN		STATE	



CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

_EXCELLENT

__FAIR

__DETERIORATED
__RUINS
__UNEXPOSED

__UNALTERED

_XORIGINAL SITE
__MOVED DATE_____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Knickerbocker Hotel is an exuberant Beaux-Arts style structure, the exterior of which was designed in 1901. (the interior was designed in 1904) The ornate facade, with its classical pediments, balconies, terraces, and mansard roof, is based on French Renaissance precedents. The main mass of the building is faced with red brick and is ornamented with Indiana limestone and cream-colored terra-cotta. The building can be divided into three horizontally massed sections: a two-story base that has been altered for commercial use, a ten-story brick shaft that retains its original form, and a three-story, steeply pitched mansard roof that has lost its original tile sheathing.

The two-story base of the Knickerbocker was adapted for commercial use in 1920 when the hotel became an office building. The 1920 store fronts have since been replaced by more modern facades. Only the rusticated stone piers of the original design remain today. The main entrance to the hotel, located on West 42nd Street, was originally composed of a projecting, Renaissance-inspired, one-story portico with an arcade of seven round arches surmounted by a balustrade. A bronze canopy extended from the portico to the street. A similar, five-arched arcade was set flush with the facade on the Broadway front. The second floor of the rusticated limestone base was articulated by a continuous row of round-arched French windows and was topped by a second story cornice that remains in place. This cornice is crowned by small balustrades that serve as guards for the third floor windows.

The main mass of the building looks much as it did in October, 1906, when the hotel opened. On West 42nd Street a seven-bay central pavilion is set between narrower, four-window wide, projecting wings. The corners of the wings are marked by terra-cotta quoins, as are all of the window enframements on the building. The central windows of the side pavilions are paired. These windows have been given a highly ornamental treatment; they are adorned with stone balconies, iron terraces, and large, sculpted, segmental-arched or Swan's-neck pediments. The other windows of this long facade are ornamented with smaller stone balconies and iron terraces, and with less elaborate segmental-arched and swan's-neck pediments.

The vertical thrust of the building is interrupted by projecting cornices placed above the fourth, ninth, and eleventh floors. The lowest of these cornices retains its stone balustrade. The bracketed cornice above the ninth floor has lost its balustrade and the modillioned upper cornice has lost its iron railing. The window enframements of the twelfth floor originally formed the bases for the dormers that project from the mansard roof. Each of the original dormers was set within an elaborate stone setting; those on the thirteenth floor had triangular or broken segmental-arched pediments, while the row of centrally placed dormers on the fourteenth floor had round-arched enframements. At some point (probably in 1920) the dormer enframements and the tile covering of the mansard were removed. The mansard, however, is crowned by its original ornate cresting and corner urns. Although no longer used, four brick chimneys still rise above the roof line.

FHR-8-300A (11/78)

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Knickerbocker Hotel
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The nine-window wide Broadway facade is similar in its detailing to the central section of the main front. The focal point of this facade is a large, segmental-arched pediment set above the central window of the fourth floor. Other windows are ornamented with the balconies, terraces, and pediments seen on the front facade.

In 1920, when the hotel was redesigned for use as an office building, the interiors were altered. The major public spaces, such as lobbies, lounges, bars, and restaurants became stores and their interior fittings were removed and sold. The upper stories were rearranged for the heeds of office tenants. Certain floors retain their original radiators and others have original terrazzo hallway floors, but few other details are extant. Architect Charles Platt designed a new elevator lobby for the West 42nd Street entrance in 1920. This lobby was clad in pink marble that remains in place.

Since the interiors have already been altered, the possible conversion of the building to residential use will have little adverse effect. It is the beautifully detailed exterior of this grand structure that is of greatest importance and needs to be preserved for the future.

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PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION	
_1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	Ascorts on Tal WAL	_SCIENCE	
_1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE	
_1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
_1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER	
_1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION	
X 1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	_OTHER (SPECIFY)	

SPECIFIC DATES

1901(exterior)
1904(interior)

AULI DER/ARCHITECT exterior-Marvin & Davis, with Bruce

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

-+--

Located on one of the most strategic corners in the Times Square area, the former Knickerbocker Hotel building is among the few existing reminders of the opulence of New York City's theater district at the turn of the century. as a rival to the nearby Astor Hotel (demolished), the Knickerbocker, in its brief career as a "hotel de luxe," entertained the cream of New York society, as well as many of the city's most illustrious visitors. With its imposing exterior massing and detailing and sumptuous interior fittings, the Knickerbocker was one of the outstanding luxury hotels in New York. Throughout the 19th century the New York theater district moved farther and farther north so that, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, theaters were being built in the Times Square (then Longacre Square) area. With the movement of theaters into this area came a parallel development of related services, including the construction of hotels. The West 40s had developed in the mid-19th century as a prosperous middle-class neighborhood built up primarily with brick and brownstone rowhouses. By the late 19th century commercial uses had begun to invade this area and, as a consequence, it was no longer regarded as a desirable place for middle-class family life. With the exodus of wealthy families the character of the Times Square area changed dramatically; the streets now became commercial and were lined with glamorous theaters and both luxurious and modest hotels. Although large hotels were being erected throughout New York City during this period, the Times Square area saw the largest concentration of such buildings. The Knickerbocker opened in 1906, two years after the Astor's completion, although the building had been planned as early as 1900. In 1900 Colonel John Jacob Astor leased a large plot of land on the southeast corner of Broadway and West 42nd Street to the International Realty and Construction Co., a Philadelphia-based firm headed by J.E. and A.L. Pennock. The small St. Cloud Hotel stood on this site, but Astor leased the land with the stipulation that a new hotel, costing at least \$2,000,000, be erected on the site. Astor loaned International Realty \$1,600,000 towards the cost of construction and retained the right to name the manager of the hotel. The Knickerbocker Holding

Those who know him best know that he knows the hotel business from the bottom to the top. They know that

Woodmanston Inn in Westchester. According to the New York Times:

Co. was set up with Astor's hand-picked manager, James B. Regan, as director. James B. Regan (1865-1932) was one of the most prominent hotel managers of this period, having worked his way from being a bar boy at Earle's Hotel to managing prestigious hotels, including the Pabst Hotel in New York and the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES King, Moses. King's Views of New York. 1908, p.76. "The Knickerbocker Hotel: A Novelty in Decoration," Architectural Record. vol. 21, January, 1907, pp. 1-17. New York Times: "Astor's May Take Over Hotel Knickerbocker," January 14, 1905, p.1. "Newest Astor Hotel to be Pushed Ahead," May 28, 1905, p.12. **10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA** ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1ess tha QUADRANGLE NAME Central Park QUADRANGLE SCALE UTM REFERENCES 58 5 5 40 45 11 8,80 A 1, 8 EASTING NORTHING VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The site is located on the southeast corner of West 42nd Street and Broadway, New York City. The site measures 185'6'2" on the north, 140'10" on the south, 102'6" on the west and 134'3" on the east, with a southerly extension at the southeast corner measuring 16'8" on the north and south and 63'3" on the east and west. LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES COUNTY CODE STATE CODE CODE STATE CODE COUNTY Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph Contact: FORM PREPARED BY 518-474-0479 NAME / TITLE Andrew S. Dolkart DATE **ORGANIZATION** New York Landmarks Conservancy June, 1979 TELEPHONE STREET & NUMBER (212) 425-4085 17 Battery Place STATE New York CITY OR TOWN New York STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS: LOCAL_X STATE NATIONAL 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 Field Service SATE Director, Historic Preservation TITLE Bureau FOR NPS USE ONLY I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER THE NATIONAL REGISTER ATTEST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Knickerbocker Hote1
CONTINUATION SHEET New York, N.Y. ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

he started in, when a boy of sixteen, at the very bottom of the ladder. He is only forty-one years old now $/\overline{1906/}$ but every year of the twenty-five which have marked his career stands for something learned and a step up in the world. ¹

The contract for designing the new hotel was given to architects Marvin & Davis, with Bruce Price as a consultant. Frederick Marvin (and possibly Davis as well²) was closely associated with Bruce Price. After graduating from Cooper Union in the 1880s, Marvin joined Price's firm and in 1895 took charge of the Canadian office, designing the Canadian Pacific's East End Station in Montreal and working on the original plans for the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City. Marvin later opened his own office in New York. This may have occurred shortly before the Knickerbocker Hotel commission, thus accounting for Bruce Price's appointment as consulting architect. Price (1843-1903) was one of the most prominent American architects during the late 19th century, having designed office buildings throughout the country, as well as a large number of elegant residences, particularly at Pierre Lorillard's Tuxedo Park development.

The architects for the hotel designed an exuberant, twelve-story, Beaux-Arts style building which was to be constructed of brick with Indiana limestone and terra-cotta trim and crowned by a massive, two-story, copper and tile mansard roof. Construction began in 1901, but on February 1, 1904, work was halted with only the structural steel skeleton and exterior brick and masonry work completed. Serious dissension had arisen within the Knickerbocker Holding Co. and Regan had resigned as director. The International Realty & Construction Co. then defaulted on the payment of the ground rent and Astor instituted dispossession proceedings. At this point the property was "earning only billboard revenues from the high fence around it."3 Construction did not resume until June, 1905 when an agreement was reached whereby Regan would rent the hotel from Astor for twenty years at a cost of \$300,000 per year. J.E. and A.L. Pennock were hired to complete the construction of the hotel which they had undertaken in 1901. The plans for the interior of the hotel were radically The architectural firm of Trowbridge & Livingston was hired to change the interior arrangement of rooms and redesign the general decorative scheme. In 1905, Trowbridge & Livingston was a relatively new architectural firm, having been established by S.B. Parkman Trowbridge (1862-1925) and Goodhue Livingston (1867-1951) in 1901. The firm had already made a mark in the hotel world with its luxurious St. Regis Hotel on Fifth Avenue and was later responsible for such prestigious buildings as the New York Stock Exchange and B. Altman's. The Knickerbocker, as completed, was far more elaborate than the building as

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Knickerbocker Hotel
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originally planned, adding a cost of over \$1,000,000 to the construction and providing New York with one of its grandest hotels. On October 24, 1906 the Knickerbocker Hotel was finally opened to the public and it was an immediate success. An advertisement that appeared in the New York Times on the day of the hotel's opening called the Knickerbocker "The Newest & Most Unique Hostelry in the Heart of the Greater City." The advertisement further noted "Appointments Unsurpassed," "Service Unique and Unrivalled," and "Everything that the traveller can wish for, that money can buy--the embodiment of all that makes for perfection."4 Although no longer extant, the decoration of the interior public spaces was extremely lavish and was highly praised in the press. In 1906, the Architectural Record wrote that "one of the most puzzling problems which confronts the design of a contemporary hotel is that of giving it some character which will strongly distinguish it in the eyes of its patrons."5 The author noted that this was accompanied by extreme richness at the St. Regis and by the use of multi-national decorative schemes at the Astor. The Knickerbocker gained its unique character by combining lavish decorative appointments with major, commissioned works of art. The most important of these works were Maxfield Parrish's "Old King Cole and His Fiddlers Three," a painting that now hangs in the St. Regis Hotel, and Frederic Remington's "The United States Calvary Charge," now in the collection of the University of Texas at Austin.

Besides the main public rooms of the hotel, located in the basement and on the first and second floors, the Knickerbocker contained 573 guest rooms, 400 of which had baths. Rooms ranged from small, inexpensive accommodations without baths, to large, richly furnished suites. The hotel was also fitted with the most advanced mechanical systems, including its own refrigeration, electric lighting, and steam heating plants.

Although it was quite a popular hostelry, catering to such notables as Enrico Caruso (who had a suite that occupied half a floor) and George M. Cohan, the Knickerbocker's history as a luxury hotel was short lived. Fourteen years after its auspicious opening the hotel closed--one of the many hotels to fall victim to prohibition. Although Regan sought to discount the effects of prohibition, it is clear that this was the factor that caused the hotel's shutdown in 1920. In 1920 the interior spaces were drastically remodeled to accommodate offices and the first and second floors were altered for commercial use. Architect Charles Platt (1861-1933) was responsible for these alterations. The office building was first known as the Knickerbocker Building, but in 1940 became the Newsweek Building, named for Newsweek magazine, the major tenant. Newsweek moved out of the building in 1959.

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Knickerbocker Hotel

New York, N.Y.

ITEM NUMBER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

The old hotel is now divided into small offices, many of which are currently vacant. The owner plans to convert the Knickerbocker to a mix of commercial and residential space.

With the exception of the commercial alterations to the lower two floors and some changes to the window enframements of the mansard roof, the Knicker-bocker's exterior retains its original character to a remarkable degree. Its boldly detailed facade is a prominent anchor on Times Square and, with the loss of the Astor Hotel and the Times Tower facade, it remains as the only surviving link to Times Square's golden past.

- 1. New York Times, August 12, 1906, pt.3, p.6.
- 2. No information on Davis has been located.
- 3. New York Times, July 28, 1905, p.2.
- 4. New York Times, October 24, 1906, p.10.
- 5. "The Knickerbocker Hotel: A Novelty in Decoration," Architectural Record, vol. 21, January, 1907, p.1.
- 6. New York Times, October 21, 1906, p.12.
- 7. Ibid.
- 8. New York Tribune, February 15, 1932, p.17.
- 9. New York Times, February 15, 1932, p.17.

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Knickerbocker Hotel New York, N.Y. **ITEM NUMBER** PAGE **CONTINUATION SHEET**

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"New Hotel Knickerbocker Will Soon be Ready," August 12, 1906,

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"New Times Square Hotel Nearly Ready," August 21, 1906, p.12.

"New Knickerbocker Decks Itself with Sculpture, Wall

Paintings and Copies of Old Masters," October 21, 1906,

pt.4, p.6.

"Knickerbocker Hotel Opens to Guests Today," October 24, 1906, p.9.

'Advertisement, October 24, 1906, p.10.

"James B. Regan Dies of Pneumonia," February 15, 1932, p.17.

Frederick Marvin obituary, December 19, 1958, p.15.

"Times Square Landmrak: New Career," January 10, 1979,

pt. 4, p.19.

New York Tribune: "Loan," March 13, 1902.

"A Masque of Flora," October 21, 1906, pt. 2, p.7.

"New Hostelry to Open," October 22, 1906, p.5.

"Knickerbocker Hotel Opens," October 24, 1906, p.4.

"James B. Regan Dies, Knickerbocker Host 14 Years."

February 15, 1932, p.17.

Stephenson, Walter T., "Hotels and Hotel Life in New York," Pall Mall.

vol. 31, 1903, pp.250-260.

Wyndham-Gittens, Herbert, "The Hotel Knickerbocker," Architects' and Builders'

Magazine. vol. 8, December, 1906, pp.89-102.

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United States Department of the Interior - Heritage Conserv	ation and Recreation Service



Knickerbocker Hotel
New York, N.Y. County
Andrew S. Dolkart June, 1979
New York Landmarks Conservancy
17 Battery Place New York, N.Y.
View towrards southeast corner
Broadway and West 42nd Street
Photo No. 173

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Knickerbocker Hotel
New York, N.Y. Company
Andrew S. Dolkart June, 1979
New York Landmarks Conservancy
17 Battery Place
View of lobby looking north
Photo No. 2 7 3

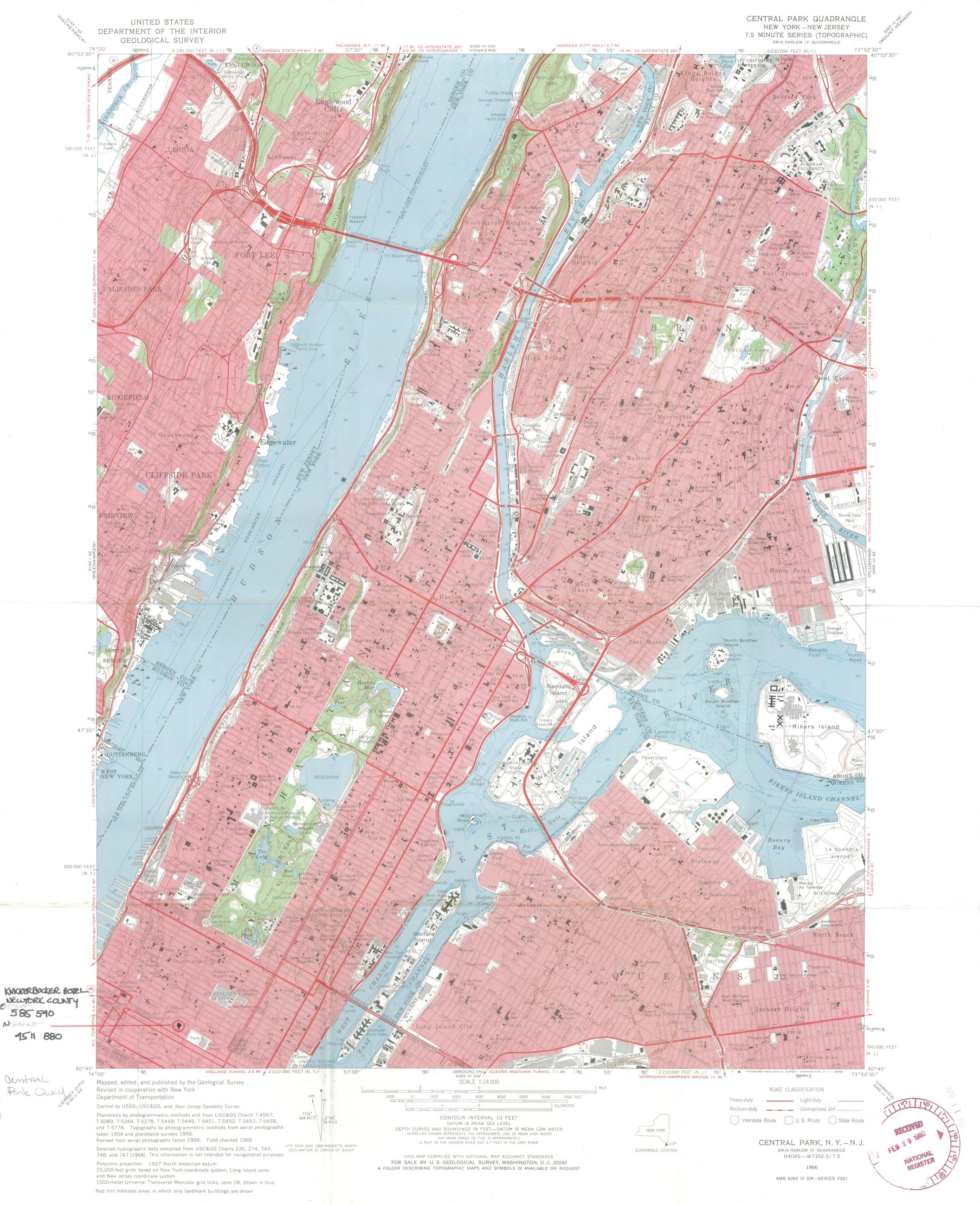
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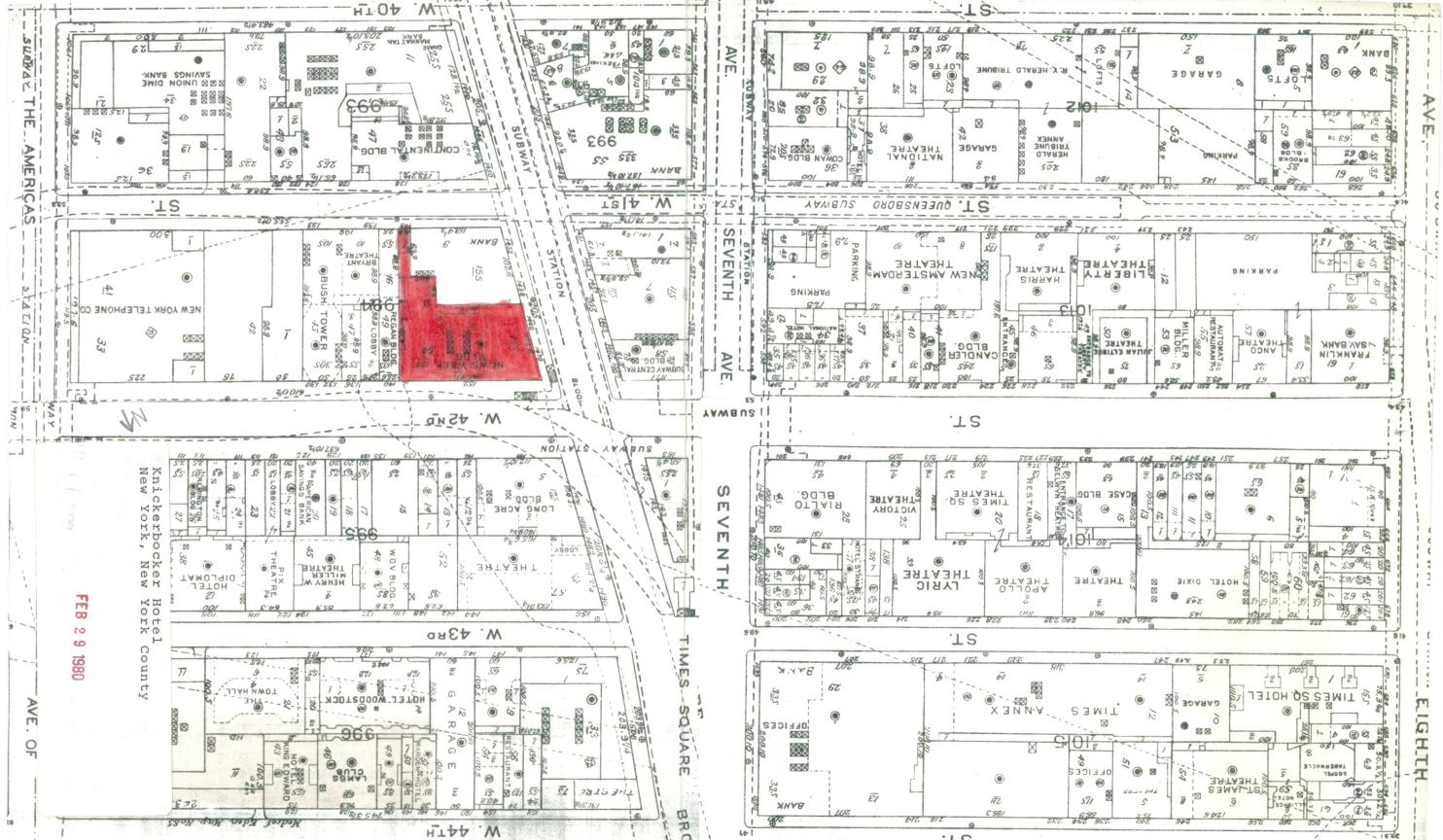
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Knickerbocker Hotel
New York, N.Y. County
Andrew S. Dolkart June, 1979
New York Landmarks Conservancy
17 Battery Place New York, N.Y.
6th floor hallway
Photo No. 373

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Knickerbocker Hotel New York, New York

Name

Location

Erwin, William, House

Miller Army Air Field Historic District

Bennett, Floyd, Field Historic District

Knickerbocker Hotel

Erie Railroad Station

Riverside Steuben County

Staten Island Richmond County

Brooklyn Kings County

New York County

Port Jervis Orange County

Also Notified

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Honorable James H. Scheuer
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For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.