

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



H60

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Prospect Hall

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 263 Prospect Avenue  not for publication

city or town Brooklyn  vicinity

state New York code NY county Kings code 047 zip code 11215

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
J.W. Alderman Dep. Comm. for Historic Pres. 18 February '99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Olson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Prospect Hall

Kings/New York

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/music facility

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/music facility

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

French Renaissance

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof asphalt

other sheet metal ornament

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

## Narrative Description

Located in mid-block, Prospect Hall has always made a monumentally large presence within its surroundings. The surrounding district consists primarily of residential and small commercial buildings, intersected by heavily commercial Fifth Avenue, a pattern that remains essentially unchanged since Prospect Hall was built. The hall is separated from the nearby residences—most of which are the very ones that existed when it was built—largely by the extent of its own grounds. The Hall is surrounded on all sides by service yards, part of which originally was an outdoor beer garden in which summer entertainment was presented. A Ferris wheel and an "electric tower" located (or planned) in the east yard are indicated in early descriptions and drawings of the building. By 1914, these had been removed and the area made into an outdoor moving picture theatre. In about 1960 the entire block of buildings south of Prospect Hall was demolished to accommodate the Prospect Expressway. Today, in place of a row of houses, Prospect Hall faces a depressed, high-speed roadway.

Prospect Hall is a four-story building in a style originally described as French Renaissance. It is faced with buff-gray brick with an elaborate ornamental program in pressed metal originally painted in imitation of limestone. Notable in this ornamental scheme are the pedimented window surrounds and the main cornice with a great central pediment filled with sculpture. Some of these elements have disappeared, but are planned for restoration. The first story originally contained a row of store fronts which, along with the columned central entrance remain in only slightly altered form. An early one-story addition to the east continues the style of the original facade. The Hall's side and rear elevations reflect the internal form of the front building, theatre and stage house. Clearly subsidiary to the main facade, they are constructed of brick, painted and entirely unornamented. The roofs are utilitarian in form, flat over the front and stage portions of the building, following the configuration of the wide-span trusses over the auditorium.

The building is organized into two main components, the front block, organized around a monumental central stairway, and the rear, which houses the monumental ballroom. There are several notable interiors including:

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

---

The main stair, a grand double-run stairway extending upward from the entry vestibule in a two-story-high central hallway. Constructed of cast iron with marble treads, the stair rises in a combination of single and double runs. It features at its first landing a pair of highly ornamental twin box offices.

The ballroom, a great central space which rises through the upper three stories of Prospect Hall. Located on the second floor, at the head of the main stair, this great rectangular space is a level-floor theatre arranged and decorated in the tradition of America's great 19<sup>th</sup> century ethnic halls. The balcony, which surrounds the space on three sides, is treated as a series of bow-fronted theatrical boxes, their floor levels stepping slightly down toward the front of the hall. The gallery, above, which retains its original wooden bench seating, has a continuous plaster rail and a somewhat steeper slope. Both balcony fascias are highly ornamented with molded cartouches and fruit garlands and are studded with exposed incandescent lamps. Both upper levels are supported by polished marble columns. The ceiling is flat with a deep ornamental cove cornice and a central dome. The dome's lighting, incorporating both exposed and concealed electric lamps is original to the building and is a superb example of early electric lighting technology as applied to a theatrical interior. The stage, located at the north end of the hall, is set within a plaster proscenium frame with an elaborate cornice. The stage retains its original full hemp rigging system, prompter's box, open-front switchboard, and an very unusual, if not unique, tambour front, allowing for under-stage storage. There is a full complement of backstage and dressing facilities.

The elevator, contained within the west stairway, provides access to the upper floors. This feature, which remains unaltered and in working condition since its installation when the building was new, consists of a cage-like cab rising within a screened hoistway encircled by the stairway.

The rathskeller, contained within a single-story wing which appears to have been added in early years to the east of the main building, has been used continuously as a public restaurant. This space retains its original tin ceiling and oak paneling. It features a cycle of painted canvas murals, and a miscellany of diminutive and whimsical decorations painted directly on the oak paneling.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

---

The bar. East of the main stairway, in a position roughly symmetrical with the west stair and elevator, is the bar. This space retains the original oak counter and elaborate plaster and marble back bar.

The bowling alleys. Located in separate basement rooms are two bowling alley installations with a total of fourteen lanes. Although long out of use, these retain significant portions of their original materials and features including lane flooring, pinsetters' pits, and ball tracks. Some original pins and balls remain.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ETHNIC HERITAGE: EUROPEAN

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1901-1903

**Significant Dates**

1901-1903

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Huberty, Ulrich J., Architect

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Brooklyn Public Library



# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

## Narrative Statement of Significance

In addition to its significance as an outstanding specimen of its architectural type and period, Prospect Hall is an important example of the large ethnic social/cultural/entertainment facility, a building type that existed in large urban immigrant neighborhoods nationwide at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Built at a peak period of European immigration, buildings of this type played an important role in facilitating the assimilation of the vast populations of America's newcomers. By providing a place for native-language entertainment, dining and active recreation as well as a facility for masonic lodges, singing societies and other ethnic cultural organizations, buildings like Prospect Hall became bridges between the old country and the new, welcoming and easing the experience of strangers in a strange new homeland. The following headings outline both the cultural and architectural significance of this great building.

## Social and cultural significance

America's great cities in the years surrounding the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became home to a multi-cultural mix of immigrants from across the European continent. As automobiles were not yet available to facilitate easy mobility, and mass communications media had not yet acted to homogenize American society, the country's newcomers faced cultural isolation. Immersed in unfamiliar surroundings, language and customs, many very naturally sought the companionship of their countrymen as they set about assimilating into their new cultural environment. Large churches, fraternal organizations, and commercial facilities like Prospect Hall became important centers of social interaction, political dissemination and cultural expression, usually directed toward audiences of homogeneous national and cultural background. Whether private, fraternal or public, such facilities typically included copious parlors, gymnasiums and bowling facilities designed to make them daily social gathering places for participants of all ages and tastes. Having to support itself in the marketplace, a commercial facility like Prospect Hall often added a full-fledged theatre function, offering to an audience that was ill-served by mainstream Broadway a variety of entertainments, ranging from old-country folk to commercial vaudeville. In the theatre function the constituency often extended well beyond its primary ethnic audience. Similarly designed and equipped, whether by Cubans in Florida or Germans in the northern states, these great halls gave their users a place to gather in comfortable surroundings as they went about the process of assimilating into the American mainstream. Particularly notable in



## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

northern states were the facilities built by Germans, whose old-country heritage had included great choral societies and public conviviality in the surroundings of large beer gardens.

Founded by a German immigrant, John Kolle, Prospect Hall provided dining, recreational, entertainment and gathering facilities to a primarily German constituency. The present hall and its predecessor served German community organizations and German Masonic lodges. Significantly, though, the cartouche above the proscenium of the great main stage bears the word "Welcome," not "Willkommen." All nationalities were welcome and it may be noted that in 1900, when the first Prospect Hall burned, the attending functionaries, both from the Hall and from the various City departments, bore Irish names.

Prospect Hall is a monument, as well, to the time when a great civic facility could arise from individual entrepreneurship, with neither corporate nor governmental sponsorship. John Kolle first became associated with a neighborhood entertainment facility when he acted as masonry contractor for Charles Feltman's Tivoli, built in 1890 about fifteen blocks from what would become the site of Prospect Hall. For sixteen years a major Coney Island restaurateur, acknowledged locally as inventor of the hot dog, Feltman may have seen the Tivoli as a winter-season extension of his seaside business. The Tivoli's main hall accommodated banquets, performances, and dancing, while downstairs were billiard, bar and bowling facilities, as well as a large indoor carousel—a reminder of the owner's Coney Island background. Evidently inspired, it took only a year from his work with Feltman's Tivoli for Kolle to set about building his own facility, Prospect Hall. In scope, the first Prospect Hall vastly outdistanced the Tivoli. In design it was not unlike the present Hall, similar in size and on the same site. Around a central second-floor ballroom/theatre were arranged bowling alleys, reception parlors, fraternal society suites and a "saloon."

Prospect Hall would become a family monument. Built by John Kolle, it was managed by his son, William. Both men and their families lived next door in a now-vanished house that was physically connected to the Hall. When the first hall burned to the ground in December 1900, the elder Kolle required sedation and was reputed to have attempted suicide by leaping into the flames. He recovered in fine style, though, for less than a year later he announced completed plans for its replacement. Like its predecessor, the new hall would be operated by William Kolle. It remained in family ownership, and proudly so, for almost forty years.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

Through the decades of Kollé ownership, Prospect Hall's function evolved significantly. In its early years it was a social and civic center. Its stage was filled with German entertainment and its many local political meetings hosted such national luminaries as William Jennings Bryant. Much of its convivial atmosphere was based upon the old-country Germanic love of beer. The advent of Prohibition changed the building's role, as it became a commercial assembly place in which the ethnic vaudeville shows of old were replaced by nationally known entertainers and, later, boxing and professional wrestling. To his great credit, always with strongly-stated respect for his family's tradition, William Kollé refrained from allowing the hall to be permanently altered into a sports arena. The almost forty years of Kollé ownership witnessed the assimilation of one ethnic population and the emergence of another. In 1940, William L. Kollé sold the Hall to the White Eagle Hall Company, a Polish-American organization, who used it much in its original fashion for another generation.

## Architectural significance

Plans for Prospect Hall were announced in October 1901 and the building formally opened on February 2, 1903. The Hall was designed by Brooklyn architect Ulrich J. Huberty, a person about whom far too little is known. He was born in 1877 and was first listed in architectural practice in 1897, when he was 20 years old. In 1899 he worked in the Manhattan office of architect Frank Freeman, with whom he designed the Brooklyn Savings Bank. By 1900 he again was practicing independently in Brooklyn. When he designed Prospect Hall, the 24-year-old Huberty also was working on a large crematory in Queens; the United National Bank, on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Broadway in Manhattan; service buildings for the Kings County Hospital and the Spanish Villa at Sea Cliff, Rhode Island. Although he was gaining prominence in the Brooklyn and New York architectural communities, the talented Huberty was fated never to achieve his potential. His career was cut short by his untimely death, on February 12, 1910, at the age of 33.

Prospect Hall's exterior is one of unusual monumentality, standing high above its neighbors. Its brick and stone facade, elaborately trimmed with applied metal ornamentation proclaimed its status as a great neighborhood institution. The interior is a large and complex assemblage of facilities related to leisure activity. It was designed to contain multiple banquet rooms, bowling alleys, bars,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

---

and suites of club rooms, all surrounding a great second-floor assembly hall. Reached by an extraordinary cast iron stairway, and with its two elaborately-ornamented balconies, domed ceiling, fully-equipped stage, and integral incandescent lighting, all of which remain intact from the day of its opening, Prospect Hall is probably the largest and best-preserved example of its type, the Victorian assembly hall set within a great ethnic community facility, remaining in the country.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

---

Bibliography

*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*      December 1, 1890  
December 2, 1890  
December 11, 1900  
December 13, 1900  
October 19, 1901  
February 3, 1903  
May 28, 1920  
April 18, 1949

Cezar del Valle, "Grand Prospect Hall" in *Marquee*, vol.29 no.2,  
Second Quarter 1997

Records indexes, NYC Department of Buildings, Brooklyn, New York

Clippings files, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn, New York

Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University, New York, New York

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

PROSPECT HALL KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

---

Verbal Boundary Description

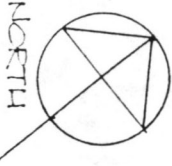
The nominated property is described as Block 1053, Lot 79, Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York, New York.

Boundary Justification

The described property represents the extent of the original Prospect Hall property, which has remained unchanged since the time of its building.

5<sup>TH</sup>

AVE.



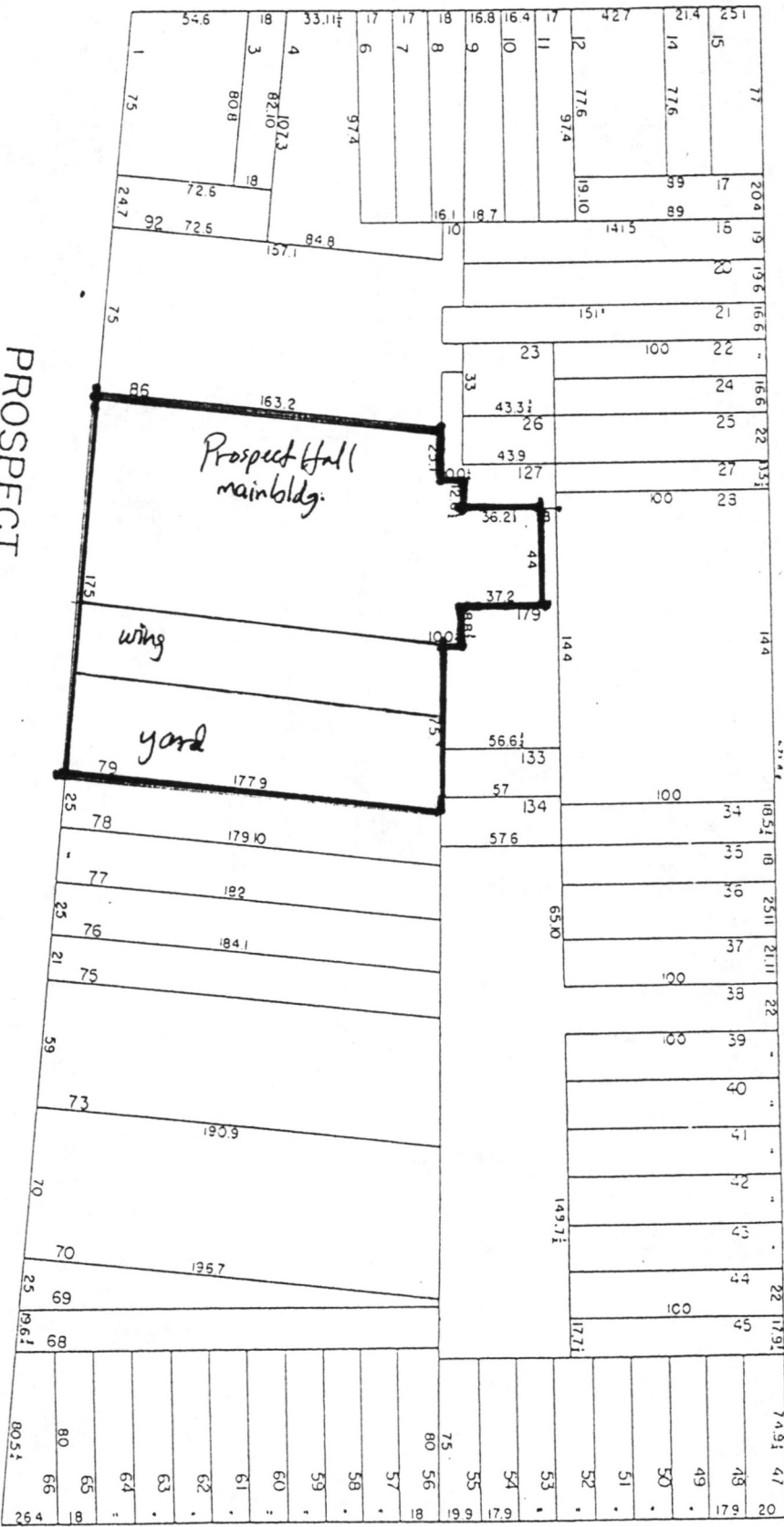
PROSPECT HALL  
 BROOKLYN, KINGS CO  
 NEW YORK  
 TAX MAP, BOROUGH  
 OF BROOKLYN, 1998

Scale 1" = approx. 80'

Boundary outlined  
 in heavy line

PROSPECT

AVE.



16<sup>TH</sup>

ST.

6<sup>TH</sup>

AVE.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Prospect Hall  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Kings

DATE RECEIVED: 3/19/99                      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/29/99  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/14/99                      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/03/99  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 99000460

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    4.15.99 DATE

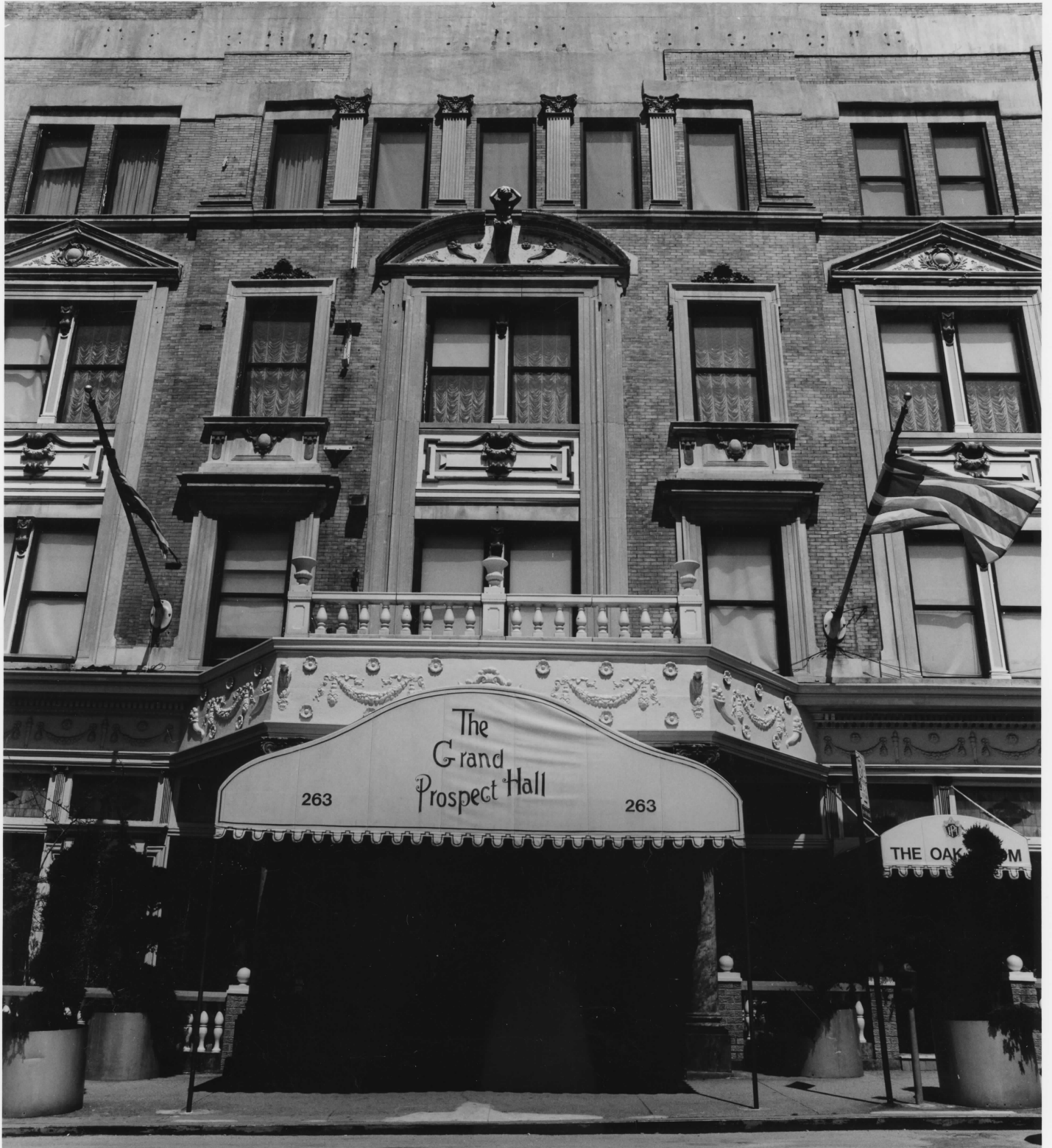
ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



The  
Grand  
Prospect Hall

263

263

THE OAK ROOM



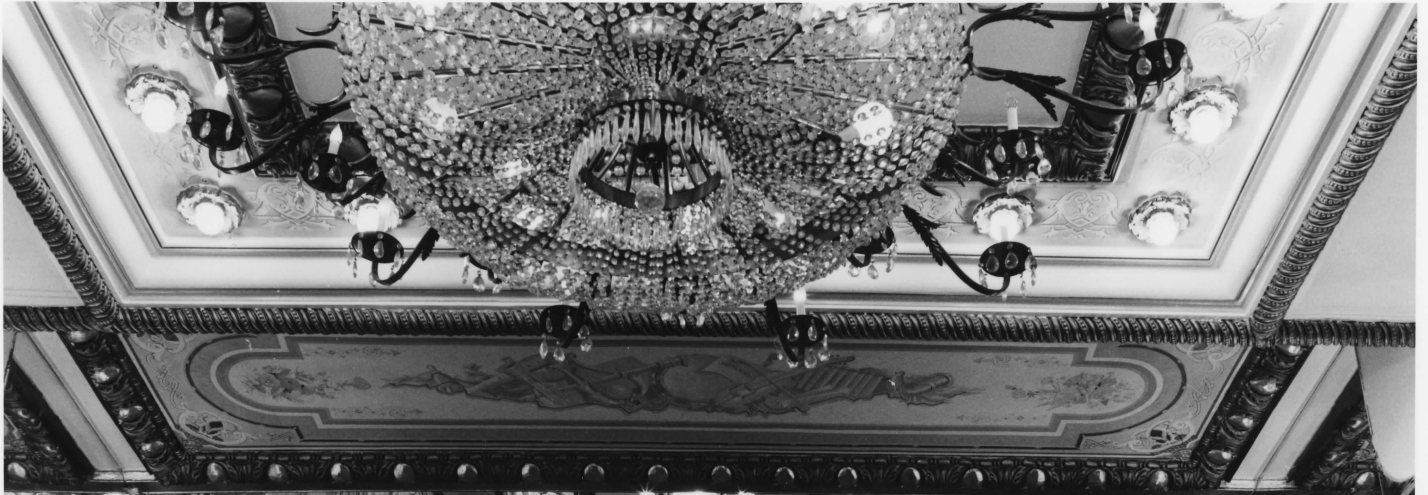
Photograph #1  
PROSPECT HALL  
Brooklyn, New York

South elevation

-6 > 12

PROSPECT HALL  
KINGS CO.  
263 PROSPECT ST.  
BROOKLYN

View: Main Entrance  
facing Southwest



Photograph #2  
of F HALL  
1, New York  
air

4 > 05

PROSPECT HALL  
KINGS COUNTY  
263 PROSPECT AVE  
BROOKLYN  
GRAND STAIRCASE  
VIEW: looking Northeast



GRAND BALLROOM  
PROSPECT HALL  
KINGS COUNTY NY  
263 PROSPECT AV.  
BROOKLYN  
View: looking ~~North~~ East  
(N.E.)



PROSPECT HALL  
KINGS COUNTY  
263 PROSPECT AVE.  
BROOKLYN  
VIEW: looking South  
west  
GRAND BALLROOM

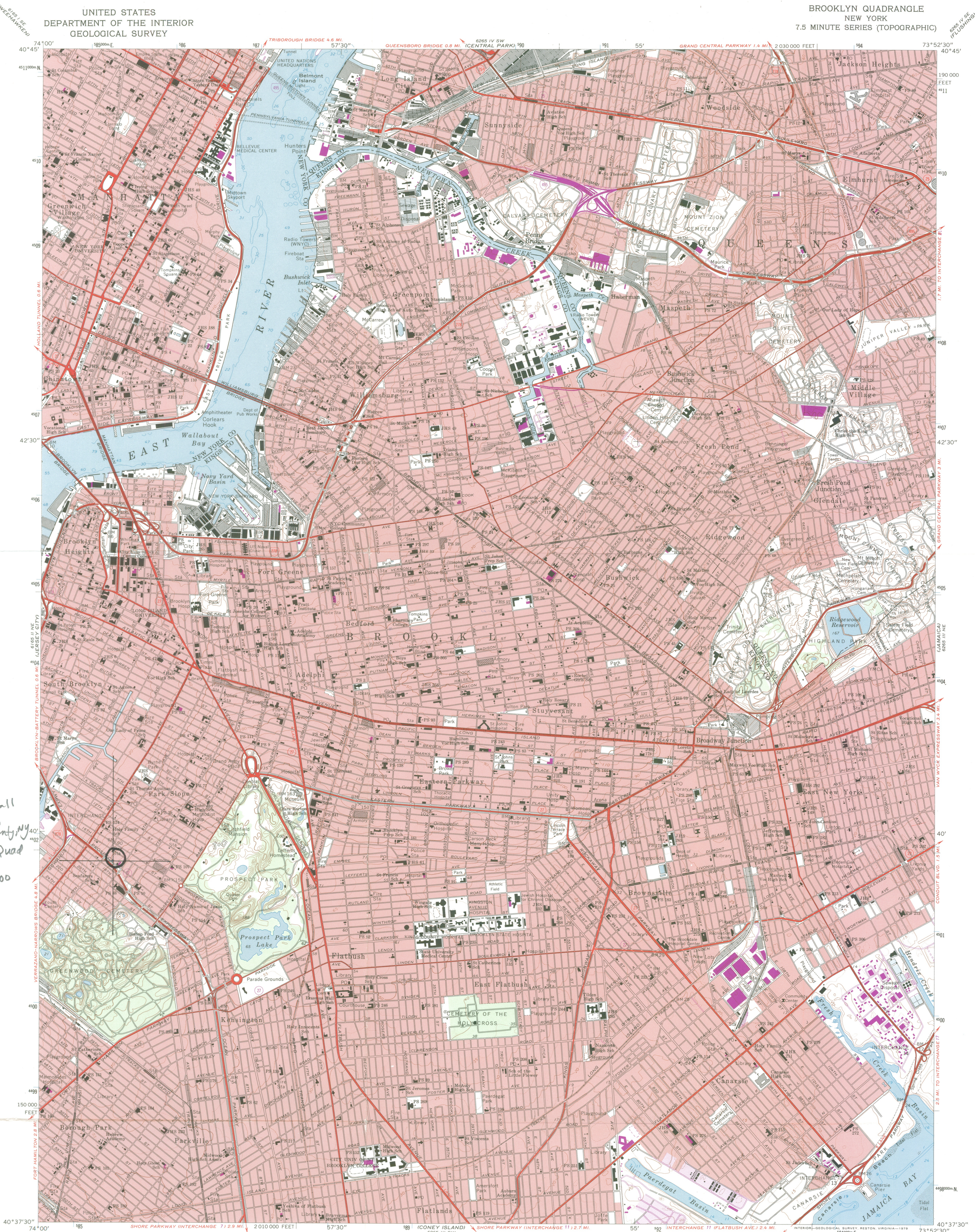




The OAK Room Restaurant  
of The GRAND Prospect Hall

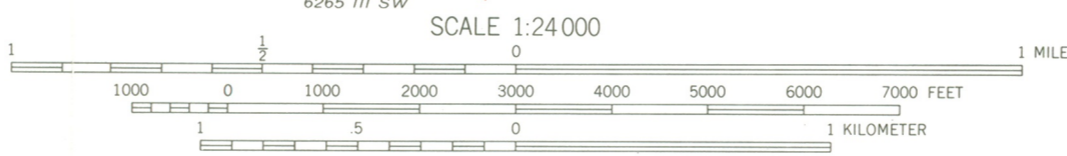
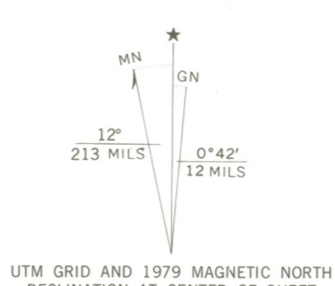
(718)-788-0777

PROSPECT HALL  
KINGS COUNTY  
263 PROSPECT AVE.  
BROOKLYN  
OAK ROOM RESTAURANT  
View: looking southwest



Prospect Hall  
Brooklyn,  
Kings County, NY  
Brooklyn Quad  
Zone 18  
Scale 1:24,000  
Easting  
585385  
Northing  
4501702

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 plane-table 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 (1965). This information is  
not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Entire area lies within New York City



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



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

BROOKLYN, N. Y.  
N4037.5—W7352.5/7.5  
1967  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
AMS 6265 III NW—SERIES V821

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

