

FHR-8-300 (11-78)

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United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic Robbins & Appleton Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1 - 5 Bond Street not for publication

city, town New York vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state New York code 036 county New York code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name One Bond Associates

street & number 137 Greene Street

city, town New York vicinity of state NEW YORK 10012

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Register's Office

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York, state N.Y. 10007

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

(LP-1038)

title LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date MAY 22, 1979 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION, 20 Vesey Street

city, town NEW YORK state N.Y. 10007

7. Description..

7. Description..

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved

date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The present Robbins & Appleton building was erected in 1879, two years after a fire destroyed an earlier cast-iron structure on the same site.¹ Designed by the same architect, Stephen Decatur Hatch, in the same commercial palazzo style, with the same cast-iron facade material, the function of the new six-story building was different. It was to serve as a factory for the American Waltham Watch Company, with some floor space leased to D. Appleton & Co., the noted book publishing firm.

Lush and intricate architectural embellishment was unnecessary on a utilitarian structure such as a factory. With the exception of the ground floor, roof, and shallow end pavilions which give the building its Second Empire character--unusual for this date and probably retained at the insistence of the client--the facade consists of a single window bay unit reproduced twelve times across each of the upper four floors in disciplined regularity. The bay unit is a deeply recessed one-over-one double-hung window flanked by smooth columns with simple necking and stylized capitals carrying a shouldered arch. The strength and beauty of the building lie in the strong horizontals of the cornices above each floor and the three-dimensional quality created by the deeply recessed windows.

The major difference between the ground floor and the upper stories is that the lower parts of the ground-floor columns are enhanced by an incised spiralling groove, and there is a handsome entrance portico, similar in design to the window units, crowned with a broken pediment carried on modillions. The impressive mansard, sheathed with imbricated slates, is pierced by Palladian-like dormers in the end towers over the shallow pavilions and by a central, four-bay-wide dormer. At the center of this dormer are two round-arch windows with keystones that carry a decorative plaque bolted to the surface. Below the pediment is a decorated bull's-eye that probably once held a clock manufactured by the owners. To either side of the central section are square-headed windows with flanking columns that carry the ends of a pediment.

Today the building's first floor, formerly a two-story space, has been altered into a first floor and upper mezzanine and is used for storage by the textile firm that occupies the space. The original cast-iron Corinthian columns appear to be intact, although the capitals are in the mezzanine. The upper floors of the building are essentially bare warehouse space and used as artists' studios.

¹The text of this report was taken almost in its entirety from the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report, Robbins & Appleton Building (LP-1038), May 22, 1979, by James T. Dillon.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1879-80 Builder/Architect Stephen Decatur Hatch

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Robbins & Appleton Building is a handsome commercial palazzo in the French Second Empire mode and is a fine representative of that type of 19th-century structure. It is an excellent example of cast-iron architecture and a commanding presence in the streetscape—a strong reminder of the city's rich architectural heritage.

No. 1-5 Bond Street was designed by Stephen Decatur Hatch. Built between June 4, 1879 and April 30, 1880, it served as a factory for the manufacture of watchcases for the American Waltham Watch Company founded by Daniel F. Appleton and Henry A. Robbins.¹ This building replaced an earlier cast-iron store, also designed by Hatch and built for Robbins & Appleton in 1871, which was destroyed in a spectacular fire on the night of March 6, 1877.²

Bond Street, opened in 1805,³ had been one of the most fashionable residential streets in the city during the second quarter of the 19th century. Many of New York's prominent families built their eloquent Federal and Greek Revival town houses along its tree-shaded length between Broadway and the Bowery. Within the span of a single generation, the quiet dignity of the street began to change, reflecting the transformation taking place in the larger city surrounding it.⁴ By the 1850s, most of Broadway from the Battery to Union Square had become commercial in character, and the side streets leading from it were beginning to shift from residential to business uses. Many of the houses on Bond Street became dentists' offices at this time, foretelling what was soon to happen to the street. In January 1860, the *New York Times* reported that, "...two or three business establishments have already invaded [Bond Street's] precincts," and "No. 1 is occupied as a restaurant, and a new hardware-store is soon to be opened next to the residence of Dr. Francis."⁵ Dr. Francis sold his house six months later.⁶ Within the next few years, most of his neighbors did the same, migrating to the newer fashionable area—Fifth Avenue. An interesting reminder of the original residential character of the area is Shinbone Alley, opening onto Bond Street next to the Robbins & Appleton Building and running behind the existing buildings through the center of the block. This alley originally provided access to the stables behind the houses on Bleecker and Bond Streets.

In 1869, the sites at 1-5 Bond Street were either purchased or leased by Robbins and Appleton, and the land was soon cleared for the erection of their first building.⁷ Completed in 1871, it was erected in only three months.⁸ Daniel Fuller Appleton (1826-1904) was born in Marblehead, Massachusetts, the son of General James Appleton (1785-1862), an officer during the War of 1812 and a leading prohibitionist and abolitionist.⁹ Daniel Appleton was educated in the public school of Portland, Maine, where the family moved in 1833 and where his father was to serve as a member of the state legislature. After being trained in watchmaking by a brother, he came to New York

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and began working for Henry A. Robbins, a watch importer, in 1852.¹⁰ He soon entered into partnership with his employer, thus forming the firm of Robbins & Appleton. In 1857 the firm purchased a small watch manufactory in Waltham, Massachusetts, which was to grow into the American Waltham Watch Company, one of the major manufacturing firms of its type in the country. Appleton was politically and socially active. He served as a member of the first national convention of the Republican Party in 1856; he was president of the New England Society in 1878-79; he held the vice presidency of the Union League Club; and he was a member of the Century, the Metropolitan and the Grolier Clubs, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹¹ Henry Asher Robbins (1829-1914) was born in Connecticut, the son of the Rev. Royal Robbins. He moved to New York about 1850 and entered business with his older brother, an importer of watches.¹² A few years later he and Appleton formed their company, which, by 1880, was producing about \$2,000,000 worth of watchcases from their new Bond Street factory.¹³

Stephen Decatur Hatch, the architect of the Robbins & Appleton Building at 1-5 Bond Street, was born in Swanton, Vermont in 1839 and settled in New York, where he entered the architectural office of John B. Snook. In 1864, after four years in Snook's office as a draftsman, he established his own practice, remaining active until his death in 1894. During his thirty-year career, Hatch designed a number of imposing domestic and commercial buildings in a wide variety of styles. Among his most notable buildings are: No. 213-15 Water Street (1868), a handsome Italianate cast-iron warehouse in the South Street Seaport Historic District; the Gilsey House hotel (1869-71), one of the city's most impressive Second Empire cast-iron buildings, at 1200 Broadway; the first Robbins & Appleton Building at No. 1-5 Bond Street (1870-71), a Second Empire cast-iron store that burned in 1877; the Dime Savings Bank (1875-77), an imposing three-sided Second Empire structure that stood on the south side of West 32nd Street at the intersection of Broadway and Sixth Avenue; the famous Murray Hill Hotel (1880) that once stood on the southwest corner of East 41st Street and Park Avenue; and two dramatic Romanesque Revival buildings along Broadway; the Manhattan Savings Institution (1889-91) at the northeast corner of Bleecker Street, and the Roosevelt Building at 13th Street.¹⁴ The cast-iron buildings, No. 213-15 Water Street, the Gilsey House, and the 1871 and the current 1879 structures at No. 1-5 Bond Street, all indicate the strong influence that the four years spent in Snook's office had upon him.

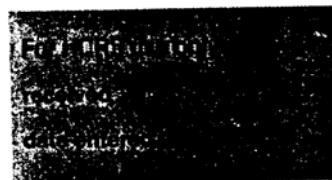
John B. Snook (1815-1901) was a leading architect with one of the largest practices in the city during the 19th century. It is the firm of Trench & Snook that is attributed with the design of the A. T. Stewart department store, still standing on the east side of Broadway between Chambers and Peade Streets. This building, begun in 1845, was among the most influential buildings erected in New York in the last century. The Stewart store, the first in the United States to

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be stylistically based on the Italian Renaissance, "created architectural repercussions up and down the Atlantic seaboard."¹⁵

The date in the city's development at which the Stewart store appeared--1845--was particularly fortuitous for the future physical appearance New York would assume. The discovery of gold in California in 1849, much of which flowed into the city's banks, the large influx of cheap labor from Ireland and Germany at the end of the decade, and the general growth of the economy, all contributed to an unprecedented expansion of the city and created a new wealthy class of citizens -- the New York merchant prince. No longer satisfied with the chaste classicism of the Greek temple, the new "calico aristocracy" wanted to express their new-found wealth and prestige in monumental architectural terms. The Stewart store, to which they flocked, recalling the palace of a Renaissance merchant prince in 16th-century Italy, ideally suited their desires. Not only did the palazzo stylistically meet the new taste of the time, it also provided practical advantages over the Greek Revival commercial building. By eliminating the characteristic columned portico, the floor area and amount of light reaching the interior was increased. The new style also provided a means for expanding a building without destroying its aesthetic effect. Once the basic design was established, it could be repeated as often as the owner wished or could afford.¹⁶ The history of the expansion of the Stewart store provides proof of this.¹⁷

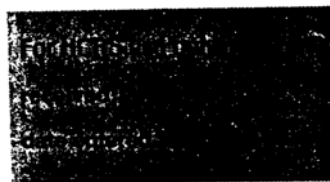
By the beginning of the 1850s, the palazzo style as the symbol of wealth and aristocracy was fixed in the popular imagination, and Broadway, in particular, metamorphosed from a street of small brick retail shops into a boulevard of marble, brownstone and cast-iron palaces. The use of cast iron as a facade material and the new style were particularly well suited for each other. To make a cast-iron facade, the designer produced full-sized drawings of the principal parts from which patterns were made. Molds were created in wet sand and pieces cast in these molds. The castings were then cleaned, chipped and filed and the ends of the columns cut smooth. The entire facade would be assembled in the fitting shop, given a coat of oxide of iron paint, and the individual members numbered. Finally, the entire facade would be separated and shipped to the building site for reassembly.¹⁸ Once the original drawings and the initial casting were made, the unit could be reproduced at any time in the near or distant future. This standardized construction technique, joined with the palace mode's basic characteristic of repetition of a basic design unit, greatly enhanced the popularity of both the material and the style.

Another reason for the popularity of cast iron as a building material was its fire-resistant quality. James Bogardus, an early manufacturer of cast-iron fronts and one of their great advocates, asserted in his pamphlet: "Cast-iron houses are perfectly fire-proof...for, it is well known, not only a high intense heat, but the use of a blast, is required to reduce iron to a molten state; and

(See Continuation Sheet)

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never yet, in any conflagration, has it been found melted, except in pieces of minute dimensions, and in such situation that the current of the flames created around them an artificial blast."¹⁹ The burning of the first Robbins & Appleton Building in 1877 gives evidence of the stability of iron structures. As reported in the New York Times, after four hours of intensive burning, the upper three floors of the six-story building collapsed. The collapse was not the result of the iron facade melting or failing, but because all interior support had been destroyed. The Assistant Fire Chief at the scene reported that, "The iron front was one of the best he had seen...The interior, however, was a forest of timber. The columns, beams, floors, and stairways inside...were chiefly of Georgia pine, and he compared the structure to a frame building encased with iron."²¹ There was also evidence of shoddy and hazardous construction of the interior²² which may explain why the building took only three months to erect. Even without interior support, the lower three floors of the facade remained standing after the fire, demonstrating the basic stability of the cast-iron facade. Because they tilted precariously over the street, they were ordered pulled down. After much time and energy was spent by scores of men in a futile attempt to accomplish this, a winch-truck--brought to the site to salvage the safes of the tenants--was needed to pull the lower floors down. Having succeeded in toppling the facade,"...the pavement in Bond-street [was] covered with fragments of fancifully painted and gilded fragments of iron, broken columns and crushed pediments."²³

The burned building was designed by Hatch as an impressive commercial palazzo--a type that reflected his training with Snook. Richly decorated in keeping with its original function, it was used as a store that attracted jewelers and dealers in silverware as its tenants. At the time of the fire in 1877, the tenants, besides Robbins & Appleton, included: Gorham Silver Manufacturing Co.; Carrier, Howkins & Sloane, jewelers; Baldwin, Sexton & Peterson, jewelers; and Taylor, Olsteade & Taylor, dealers in fancy goods, among others.²⁴

Today the Robbins & Appleton Building continues to be used as a commercial structure and remains a commanding presence in the streetscape.

¹New York City Department of Buildings. Plans, Permits & Dockets. New Building Permit NB # 373-1879.

²New York Times, March 7, 1877.

³Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1784-1831, Analytical Index (New York: The City of New York, 1930). Listing for Bond Street gives a large number of references to the opening, grading, etc., of the street.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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⁴Charles Lockwood, Bricks and Brownstone (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), pp. 40-49; Charles Lockwood, Manhattan Moves Uptown, An Illustrated History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), pp. 49-51, 58, 73, 172.

⁵New York Times, January 19, 1860.

⁶New York Times, July 28, 1860.

⁷Conveyances of Deeds and Real Property, Surrogates Court, Block 529, Lot 10; Liber 1088, Page 649; Liber 1106, Page 423; Liber 1129, Page 598.

⁸New York City Department of Buildings. Plans, Permits and Dockets. New Building Permit, N. B. #43-1871.

⁹Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 327.

¹⁰New York Street Directories, 1852/53.

¹¹New York Times, February 6, 1904 (Appleton Obituary).

¹²New York Street Directories, 1850/51; New York Times, January 23, 1914 (Robbins Obituary).

¹³Henry R. Stiles, ed., A History of Kings County, including the City of Brooklyn, II (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co., 1884), p. 776.

¹⁴Architecture and Building, August 19, 1894 (Hatch Obituary).

¹⁵Winston Weisman, "Commercial Palaces of New York: 1845-1875," Art Bulletin, 36 (December 1954), 288.

¹⁶Ibid., 289.

¹⁷Mary Ann Smith, "John Snook and the design for A. T. Stewart's Store," The New York Historical Society Quarterly, LVIII (January 1974), 22-33.

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¹⁸Landmarks Preservation Commission, SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District
Designation Report (LP-0768) (New York: City of New York, 1973), p. 17.

¹⁹James Bogardus, "Cast Iron Buildings: Their Construction and Advantages,"
The Origins of Cast Iron Architecture in America (New York: DaCapo Press, 1970),
p. 12. (Reprint of 1856 pamphlet.)

²⁰New York Times, March 7, 1877.

²¹New York Times, March 8, 1877.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴New York Times, March 7, 1877.

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

UMT References

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

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 529, Lot 10 as outlined on the attached map comprises the nominated site.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne B. Covell, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

organization Agency I, Empire State Plaza date 8/82

street & number 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title Commissioner date 9/29/82

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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36 (December 1954), pp. 285-302.

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New York County, NY

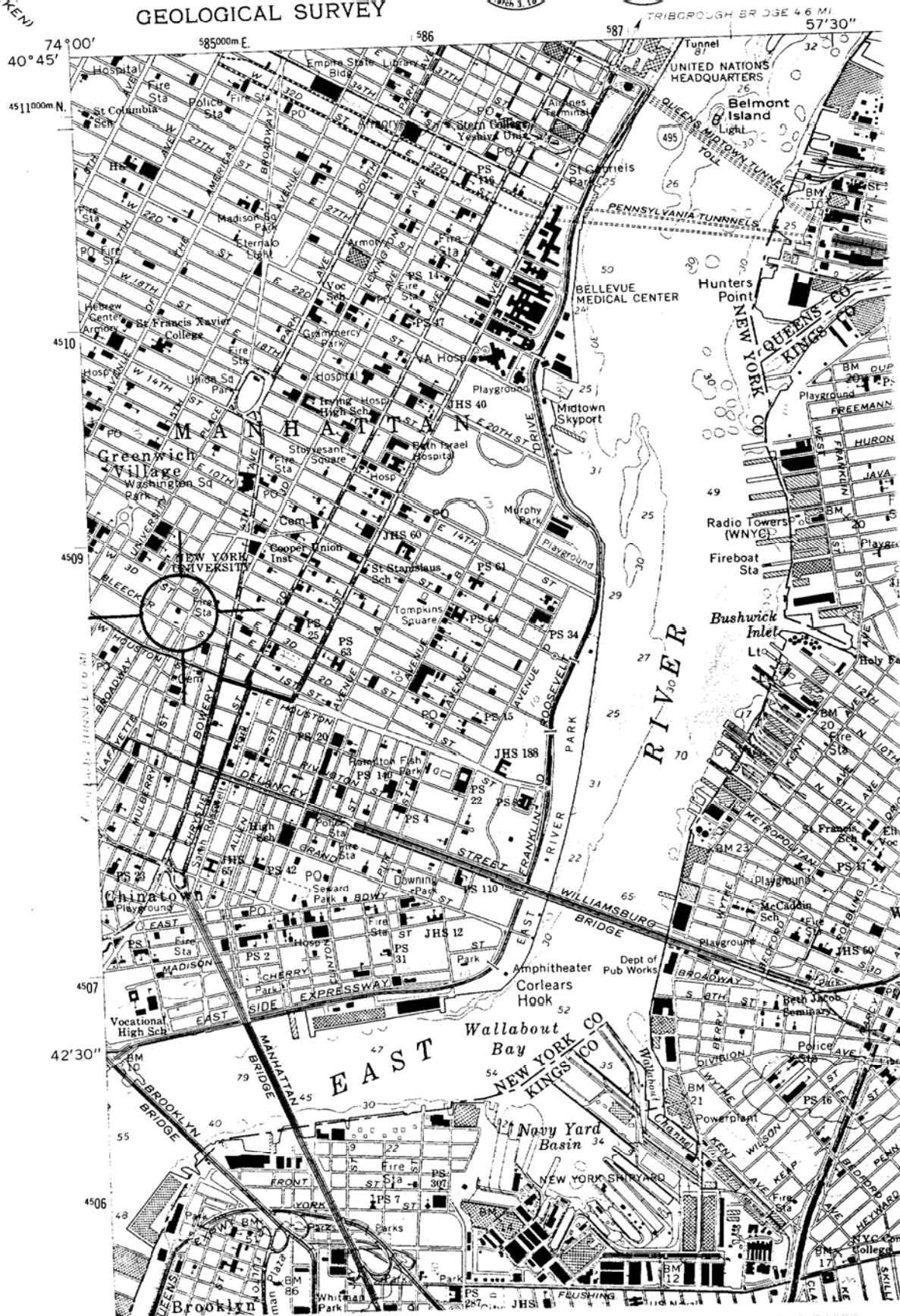
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Form Prepared By:

Gloria McDarrah, Research Assistant for
Joan R. Olshansky, National Register Coordinator
N.Y.C. Landmarks Preservation Commission
20 Vesey St.
New York, NY 10007
212-566-7577



Robbins and Appleton Building
1-5 Bond Street, New York County, NY
UTM Reference: 18/584800/4508700
BROOKLYN QUAD



ROBBINS & APPLETON BUILDING
New York County, New York
Manhattan Land Book, Plate 23
New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1977
1-5 Bond Street

