

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Seventh Regiment Armory

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 643 Park Avenue not for publication

city, town New York vicinity of

state New York code county code

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name The Trustees of the Seventh Regiment

street & number 643 Park Avenue

city, town New York vicinity of state New York

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1975 federal state county local

depository for survey records National Park Service - 1100 "L" Street, NW

city, town Washington state DC 20013-7127

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Seventh Regiment Armory occupies an entire city block bounded by Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue and 66th and 67th Streets on land formerly designated part of "Hamilton Square." Comprised of two parts -- a three story building with various meeting and reception rooms facing Park Avenue and a one story drill shed behind -- the structure provided sumptuous headquarters for the city's most elite volunteer military organization and served as model for a whole series of armories the city constructed in the following years.

The exterior is a massive Gothic structure of brick with granite trim, 200 feet on Park Avenue and 400 feet on the street facades. The best architectural description appeared in a contemporary magazine shortly after it was built:

The Fourth Avenue [Park] front, of 200 feet, with a depth of 100 feet, is built three stories high, and forms what is called the administration building. A tower rises above the central entrance, and in this and the square, slightly projecting corners there are narrow loopholes for musketry. The long, narrow windows and the castellated appearance of the massive cornice strongly suggest the purposes of the structure. Three stories of the administration building are divided into ten rooms for the several companies, a council chamber, veteran corps room, library, reception room, staff rooms, band and drum corps rooms, armorer's and janitor's rooms, rifle gallery, gymnasium, and a cadet corps room.... The remaining space, 200 feet wide by 300 feet deep, is a drill-room, the floor on the solid earth and the roof a broad oval, supported by iron truss arches designed by the architects as an improvement in strength on the supports of the arched roof of the Grand Central Depot. Care has been taken to secure a perfect floor. On a five-inch layer of concrete, covered with asphalt, to hold back the moisture of the soil, have been laid sleepers of Long Island locust, sixteen inches apart, the intervening spaces filled in with concrete. The flooring strips of yellow pine plank, three inches wide and two inches thick, are laid on this foundation, the planks being cut across the grain to prevent slivering. The drill-hall is lighted from the sides and from the roof. There are balconies for spectators at each end, and a narrow raised platform encircles the walls. Racks for muskets are ranged against the walls of the administration building, in the third story of which is a lunch and coffee kitchen.¹

Minimal alterations were carried out from 1909 to 1911. A belfry was removed from the central tower, the third floor was remodeled, a fourth story added and two mezzanine floors inserted in the administration building on the side facing the drill room. In 1930 another story was added to the administration section of the building, making it a full four stories with a fifth story set back from the front facade. The fortress-like appearance of the building is enhanced by the massive crenellated towers.

On the east side of the building is the large Drill Room some 300 feet in depth spanned by a barrel vault or balloon shed that rests on a series of parallel arched iron trusses that spring from the floor reminiscent of a train shed.

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	X architecture	education	X military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates 1877 - 1880 **Builder Architect** Charles W. Clinton Stanford White

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Seventh Regiment Armory has the distinction of being not only the first true armory built in Manhattan but also the only one to be owned by the Regiment for which it was constructed. The building contains one of the most significant group of 1880s high-style interiors and furniture outside of a museum. The Veteran's Room is the only intact interior designed by Tiffany left in this country.

The history of the Seventh Regiment dates back to 1806 when volunteer companies were initiated and a group of merchants and professional men responded to the call. These New Yorkers of substance became the 11th Regiment in 1812 guarding New York Harbor.

When the Marquis de Lafayette returned to America in 1824 the Regiment was selected to serve as his Honor Guard during his visit to New York. As a compliment to Lafayette, who commanded the Garde Nationale in Paris, the Regiment adopted the name "National Guards." Designated a separate battalion and having expanded from four to eight companies, it was reorganized as the 27th Regiment, New York State Artillery on May 6, 1826. During the course of the next 15 years the Regiment was called out to aid the local police during the Election Riot of 1834, the Abolition Riot of 1834, the Stevedore Riot of 1836, the Flour Riot of 1837, and two Croton Water Works Riots in 1840.

Reorganization of the militia system during the 1840s resulted in the regiment's change of name to the Seventh Regiment, New York State Militia, on July 27, 1847. Participation in controlling the Astor Place Riot, the Dead Rabbit Riot and the Draft Riot of this decade clearly aligned the Seventh Regiment with the conservative element in New York. The official escort for the body of President Monroe in 1858, the regiment was at this time also acquiring a national reputation. Winfield Scott, Commanding General of the Army, observed in January, 1861, that the Seventh was the only regiment which could safely be brought to Washington owing to sectional jealousies because it "has become somewhat national, and is held deservedly in the highest respect."²

It followed that the Seventh was the first selected by the Governor of New York to protect Washington in April 1861. In years after the Civil War, the popular regiment, quartered since 1860 in an armory cum market building near Tompkins square, began to press the city to build a new armory further uptown. After the city offered the present site but refused to come up with the necessary funds for construction the regiment began a fund raising campaign in 1876:

Of the armory fund, \$200,000 was the voluntary contribution of members of the regiment and wealthy citizens. Bonds were issued, with legislative sanction, for \$150,000, secured by an assignment of the lease and the building to the trustees of the armory fund.... The very successful issue of the New Armory Fair,...the principal semi-social event of the autumn, enabled the regiment properly to furnish the armory...³

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 4 acres

Quadrangle name Central Park

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000
7½ Series

UTM References

A

1	8	5	8	7	2	6	0	4	5	1	3	2	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Borough of Mahattan Tax Map Block 1401, Lot 1, Sixty-sevth to Sixty-seventh Streets between Park and Lexington Avenues. Boudary encompasses only the armory.

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 Carolyn Pitts (Edited by Sophia Duckworth Schachter)

organization History Division date

street & number 1100 "L" Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8172

city or town Washington state DC

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

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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The lavish interiors of the administration building remain largely unchanged. The most elaborate room is that of the Veterans', decorated by Louis Comfort Tiffany and Co., a new firm with the original partners being Tiffany, Samuel Colman, Candace Wheeler and Lockwood DeForest which would soon become better known as "Associated Artists." Tiffany hired Stanford White as architectural consultant for both this room and the adjoining one, originally a library, now known as the "Trophy Room." The decor of the other regimental rooms on the first floor, designed by the architect, Charles Clinton, was executed by the city's leading decorating firms and cabinet makers. Ten original company rooms and two additional ones dating from 1911 occupy the second floor. The companies were permitted to choose the design and decorator and vied with each other to attain the most beautiful room.

Of particular note in the armory interior is the beautiful carved woodwork in the great rooms, hallways and entrance hall with its ceremonial staircase. There have been only minor alterations in the major rooms: reworked and extended woodwork in the Colonel's Reception Room (1948); installation of a balcony in the drill room (1909); re-design of the third floor (1909-1911); and new storage space inserted in the drill shed after World War II.

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The architect chosen was Charles W. Clinton (1838-1919) a veteran of the Seventh Regiment. A well known New York architect, Clinton had trained in the office of Richard Upjohn and would go on to design such well known structures as the Rhinelander Building, Hotel Astor and the Apthorp Apartments.

The cornerstone of the Seventh Regiment Armory was laid in October, 1877; construction of the exterior was completed in 1879; when the lavish decoration of the rooms was mostly complete in 1880, the regiment celebrated the occasion at a grand social event known as Subscribers' Day which had wide press coverage. Scribner's wryly observed:

The architect has adapted the Italian style to a special purpose, which has no parallel in any part of Europe, for America is not a camp, and the militia system of the United States is indigenous to the soil and atmosphere of republican institutions. The New York Seventh wanted for an Armory neither a barracks nor a fort. It sought something between a military club-house and a barracks-arsenal -- a structure that should look like the home of an active military organization, and speak in its plain, massive walls and noble aspect of the utility and dignity and firmness and strength of the National Guard.⁴

All the leading decorating establishments of the late 19th century participated in the embellishment of the Armory. In addition to the decorative work of Louis Comfort Tiffany and his colleagues there is cabinet work by Herter Brothers, and Kimble and Cabus and furniture made by Louis Marcotte and Alexander Roux. These large companies maintained their own factories and showrooms. Five rooms at the armory were furnished by the firm of Pottier and Stymus on Lexington Avenue. Their advertising boasted 400,000 articles of furniture of every pattern--all of its photographed and "encased in elegantly bound volumes, for the inspection of the patrons of the establishment." This collection of decorative arts in their original settings makes the Armory a unique exhibition of the best American nineteenth century craftsmanship.

The Regiment did distinguished service in both World Wars. Today the Seventh is the 42nd Infantry Brigade of about 1300 men and when the armory is not actively used by the military, it is utilized for special reviews, receptions, and balls. It should be noted that the large drill room was the location for the National Indoor Tennis Championships from 1908 until 1963.

The Seventh New York has a long and illustrious lineage recognized by the Department of the Army. It was organized in May and June, 1806, and had a continuous record from 1806 until 1970, when it was released from active Federal service.

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Footnotes

1. Buel, Clarence C. "The New York Seventh," Scribner's Monthly, 1880. Reprinted by W. T. Genns, Santa Barbara. pp. 78-79.
2. Ibid. p. 78.
3. Ibid. p. 79.
4. Ibid.

Bibliography

- Bradfield, Geoffrey N. and Le Gendre. Seventh Regiment Armory. Historic Preservation Committee and New York ASLD. New York, 1983.
- Brownell, William C. "Decoration in the Seventh Regiment Armory." Scribner's Monthly (1881). Reprint. Santa Barbara, California: W. T. Genns.
- Buel, Clarence C. "The New York Seventh." Scribner's Monthly (1880). Reprint. Santa Barbara, California: W. T. Genns.
- Landmarks Designation Report, Number 3, LP-0417. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, June 9, 1967.
- Papers of the Seventh Regiment. Archives, Seventh Regiment Armory, 643 Park Avenue, New York, New York.
- Schachter, Sophia Duckworth. The Seventh Regiment Armory of New York City: A History of its Construction and Decoration. Master's Thesis, Columbia University, 1985.
- Todd, Col. Frederick P., and Maj. Kenneth C. Miller. Pro Patria et Gloria: The Illustrated Story of the One Hundred and Fifty Years of the Seventh Regiment of New York. Hartsdale: Rampart House, 1956.
- Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, (Deceased). Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970.