

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name McGraw-Hill Building  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 330 West 42nd Street  not for publication  
city, town New York  vicinity  
state New York code N.Y. county New York code 061 zip code 10036

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

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

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Office building

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Modern

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation black-granitewalls blue-green terra cotta

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roof other 

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The McGraw-Hill building rises 35 stories on the west side of 42nd Street. When built in 1931, it was supposed to begin the revival of a depressed neighborhood. The following description is from the National Register nomination, by Andrew Dolkart:

The most notable feature of the building is the polychromatic streamlined ground floor on West 42nd Street. Here, two large glass-enclosed commercial spaces, originally the McGraw-Hill Bookstore and a bank, flank a recessed, five door wide, centrally placed entryway. Curving bands of enameled steel connect the storefronts to the entrance. This banding is composed of alternating green and blue stripes separated by narrow, raised chrome bars. In addition, wide, raised, bronze bars have been placed within each blue field, adding a sense of three-dimensional texture to the design. The entire ground floor rests on a base of black stone and is topped by an enameled blue frieze ornamented with raised chrome bands that supported large bronze letters spelling out the building's name and address.

The unornamented main mass of the building rises directly from the ornate ground floor. With the exception of variations in width due to the setbacks above the tenth and fifteenth floors and above the sixth floor on the West 41st Street facade, all mandated by the New York City zoning regulations, each level between floors two and thirty-one is identical. The facades are composed of wide bands of windows that alternate with areas of blue-green terra-cotta. The double-hung windows are set in groups of four, each group separated by a vertical metal spandrel that was painted a dark shade so that it would seem to disappear. Each sash is separated into three or four panes by horizontal mullions that give further emphasis to the building's dominant horizontal form. The terra-cotta areas, each six courses high, are particularly notable for their shading -- the blue-green being darker near the street and getting progressively lighter as the building rises, so that it eventually blends with the color of the sky.

A setback above the thirty-first floor marks the original location of the McGraw-Hill corporate offices. The smooth horizontal line of the building is broken at the thirty-third floor by the presence of a two-story, ten-

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D    NHL # 4

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1930-present

Significant Dates

1930-31

Cultural Affiliation

Hood, Raymond; Godley, Frederick; and  
Fouilhoux, Andre

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The McGraw-Hill building is the last of the pace-setting skyscrapers in New York by Raymond Hood, after the American Radiator, Daily News, and the RCA building at Rockefeller Center. The blue-green glazed terra-cotta blocks that give the building its distinct character represented the largest application of this material ever tried on massive walls. The International Style design is related to the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society Building of 1932 by Howe and Lescaze.

The McGraw-Hill Building comes "nearest to achieving esthetically the expression of the enclosed steel cage," wrote the high priests of academic European modernism, Phillip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock.<sup>1</sup> If it was seen as an intellectually rigorous architectural exercise in its day, it is also appreciated today for its vigor and variety of surfaces which have come back into style, rather like the vivid ornament that enlivens the Chrysler Building. It was also an example of the innovative genius of Raymond Hood. It exemplifies the great corporate growth of two independent publishers into a giant publishing house, McGraw-Hill.

James Herbert McGraw (1860-1948) and John Alexander Hill (1858-1916) were pioneers in the publication of specialized journals for the electrical and engineering fields. Hill, originally from Sandgate, Vermont, grew up in Mazomanie, Wisconsin; after working as a railway engineer out west he came to New York City in 1888 to join the American Machinist Publishing Company. He quickly became editor of Locomotive Engineer, buying it in 1891, and going on to build the Hill Publishing Company (formed in 1901), which, by the time of his death, was publishing five major engineering journals: American Machinist, Power, Engineering News, Engineering and Mining Journal, and Coal Age. In 1914 he built the twelve-story Hill Building for his growing company at 469-473 Tenth Avenue at 36th Street, and incorporated into it several innovations -- including an early version of air-conditioning combined with unopenable windows. McGraw, from Panama, Chautauqua County, New York, worked upstate as a printer and later as a school teacher, before coming to New York City in 1885 to join the American

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

McGraw-Hill Publishers

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property less than 1 acre

UTM References

A 

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

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Borough of Manhattan, Tax map Block 1032, Lot 48.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the original site for which the building was designed.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Carolyn Pitts, Historian  
organization History Division, NPS date 2/9/89  
street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8166  
city or town Washington state DC zip code 20013

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bay wide projection. These two floors are set apart from the rest of the building by the introduction of a decidedly vertical emphasis. This verticality is accented by paired, 1 x 1 windows surmounted by metal panels and flanked by projecting piers. By setting this section apart from the rest of the building, architect Raymond Hood symbolized the importance of the corporate hierarchy and also provided a transition between the main mass of the building and the ornate horizontal crown.

The most notable features of the crowning element, which incorporates much of the building's service equipment, are the projecting horizontal terraces and bandcourses that give the building its eccentric, modernistic silhouette. In the center of this crown are large letters that advertise "McGraw-Hill." Originally painted white and set off on a blue-green background, this sign is surmounted by a typical Art Deco zig-zag pattern. Before the letters were painted over, after McGraw-Hill's departure from the building, this sign was among the most prominent landmarks of New York City's skyline.

The interior lobby of the building is quite simple in its detail and gains its effect from the careful use of color. The banding that flanks the entrances is continued into the outer lobby and serves to move the visitor from the entrance to the main portion of the lobby. The central lobby is faced with solid green enameled steel panels. In this area are located the interior entrances to the original bookstore to the left and the bank to the right, as well as the building's directory and a clock.

The only horizontal details in this area are a pair of ventilators shielded by chrome bars. The dynamic polychromatic bands of the exterior reappear once one has passed the directory and lead directly to a stairway and cigar store and then to two banks of elevators. The elevator lobbies have the passive solid green walls, as did the elevator cabs (resurfaced), since these are areas for waiting. The elevator doors are of silver-colored metal ornamented with full-length, concave bronze stripes. Above each elevator are floor markers with silver-colored numbers and a bronze pointer. The only other decorative forms in the lobby are small projecting signboxes marking the commercial spaces and elevators, and silver lettering that reads "FIRE PUMP."

The upper floors of the building, below the corporate offices, were designed as strictly utilitarian spaces. The elevator banks are located in the center of each floor and unornamented open space radiates from this central core. The only decorative details in this section of the building's interior are small floor number markers set into the original stone flooring in front of each elevator door.

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The most surprising element of the McGraw-Hill Building's interior design is the conservative decorative scheme of the corporate offices. While the exterior and public spaces of the building make a progressive, modernistic architectural statement, the corporate offices are styled in a traditional Georgian fashion, complete with fielded paneling, crossetted enframements, and oval rooms. One can only imagine that this Colonial Revival detailing was chosen because the corporate officers felt most secure with traditional decorative forms that embodied conservative stability and a continuity of traditional values. The detailing of these corporate office floors was executed in a sophisticated manner and is quite impressive. Most notable is the large central lobby on the thirty-second floor with its zodiac chandelier and its murals painted by Ezra Winters.

Although the care of the building has been neglected in recent years, it remains in very fine condition. The major losses are the removal of the bronze entrance signs, the painting out of the McGraw-Hill sign on the crown, and the replacement of the original elevator cabs. Much of the exterior coloring is in need of restoration.

Although the building needs to be cleaned, much of the original color remains intact and requires minimal refurbishing.

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Railway Publishing Company. He later took over the Street Railway Journal, and gradually built up the McGraw Publishing Company, until by 1917 it included six major electrical and engineering journals.

McGraw and Hill first joined forces in 1909. Each had branched out into the publication of engineering books, and, in that year, they merged their side-line operations into the McGraw-Hill Book Company -- a flip of a coin determined that Hill would be its president and that McGraw's name would come first in the new company's name. Following Hill's death in 1916, the two journal-publishing companies, which had been major rivals, considered merging as well, and in 1917 the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company came into being, with James H. McGraw its president.<sup>2</sup>

The Company expanded tremendously until, in 1929, it was necessary to build a new plant. Located in a depressed neighborhood, the new site was not limited by zoning laws (they applied to structures between Third and Seventh Avenues), and it was easily accessible to Grand Central Terminal and Pennsylvania Station as well as being located between two Post Offices. Various engineering societies were nearby and it was situated on a major cross-town artery. The location did not upgrade the area and the vast publishing company finally relocated to Rockefeller Center in 1970.

Raymond Hood used the verticality of the tall building in the design of the Daily News building but broke with tradition in the plans for McGraw-Hill. Curtain wall construction was one of the most important innovations of the 20th century, and it was used in construction here.

The McGraw-Hill Building is constructed of continuous bands of windows alternating with narrow bands of masonry, making it the first horizontally massed skyscraper. Designed with a minimal number of setbacks, the building gives the effect of a slab and, as such, is the first expression of the curtain wall in a high-rise building. The McGraw-Hill Building is the forerunner of the horizontally massed, curtain-walled office towers built in American cities beginning in the 1950s. Although the main mass of the building is unornamented, there is Art Deco detailing on the ground floor, lobby, and crown. This melding of conservative and revolutionary forms makes the McGraw-Hill Building the pivotal structure in the evolution of the skyscraper, from the ornamental building of the 1920s and 1930s to the unornamented towers of the mid-20th century.<sup>3</sup>

This building also employed a fascinating use of materials and color -- the first tall building finished entirely in polychrome, constructed of metal and glass with spandrels of blue-green terra-cotta. The color was selected because its reflecting surface blended with the sky, and the higher stories tended to melt into the atmosphere.

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A contemporary journal (1931) went into detail:

The metal covered vertical piers are painted a dark green-blue, almost black. The metal windows are painted an apple green color. A narrow band of vermilion is painted on the face of the top jambs of the windows and across the face of the metal covered piers. Vermillion is also used on the underside of the horizontal projections on the penthouse and on the signs on the sides of the penthouse and over the front entrance. The golden color of the window shades effectively complements the cool tone of the building. They have a broad blue-green vertical stripe in the center tying them into the general color scheme. Their color is an unusually important element of the exterior design. The entrance vestibule is finished in sheet steel bands enameled dark blue and green alternately, separated by metal tubes finished in silver and gold. A portion of the main corridor adjoining the transverse elevator corridor is finished like the entrance vestibule. The walls of the main and elevator corridor are finished in sheet steel enameled a green color.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to its startling color, there were horizontal bands of windows that could be opened, four double-hung windows to a unit that ran ribbon-like around the building. The point was maximum ventilation and natural light -- and above the fifteenth floor, windows on all four sides of the tower flood the interior with light.

The McGraw-Hill sign that crowns the building hides the water tanks, elevators and ventilators. The sign itself was once painted with bright colors. The monumental entrance on Forty-second Street, streamlined in the Art Deco manner, consists of alternating blue and green enameled steel bands with raised bronze and chrome-nickel steel bars -- the ornament continues into the blue-green enameled lobby. The ornament was originally simonized to retain a satin finish. Even the elevator cabs were finished in baked green enamel on steel and originally the elevator operators wore green uniforms with silver stripes.

Contemporary critics were not all kind to Raymond Hood or the McGraw-Hill building:

When McGraw-Hill approached Hood in 1930, he was at the height of his career. He had been appointed one of the eight supervising architects for the Chicago World's Fair; he was one of the architects for Rockefeller Center; and his Daily News Building was rising on East 42nd Street. Articles about him were appearing everywhere, and the New Yorker Magazine summed up his position in the architectural world as follows:

Leading the New York modernists at this moment are Ralph Walker, Ely Jacques Kahn, and Raymond Hood. Raymond Hood possesses the position in architecture that he wants. He is its brilliant bad boy.<sup>5</sup>

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The building actually is a unique blend of Art Moderne and the International Style, one of the important pace-setting structures in the history of the tall buildings in America.

It was the decade of the metropolitan era and commercial construction in which the corporate skyscraper was a symbol of the business carried on within its walls. Hood was a pragmatic builder who accepted the limitations of designing for dense and expensive land use. He also had great style and went right to the point of creating a design that met clients' needs. He was not philosophic nor was he an experimental practitioner.

The magazine Architectural Forum, in 1935, made two incisive statements about Raymond Hood: "If he was not a great originator, he was at all events 'original,'" and "His life was a joy ride in which everybody got a thrill including the client."<sup>6</sup>

Footnotes:

1. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson, The International Style (New York: W. W. Norton, 1932; 1966), p. 98.
2. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Report: Anthony Robins, 1981, pp. 1-2.
3. Ibid., p. 7.
4. Arthur T. North, Contemporary American Architects, Raymond Hood (New York: Whittlesey House, 1931), p. 14.
5. "Hood," Architectural Forum, 61 (Spring 1935), p. 153.
6. Ibid., p. 154.

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Burlingame, Roger. Endless Frontiers: The Story of McGraw-Hill. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959.

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W. 44TH

McGraw-Hill Building  
New York, New York County  
Site Map

JAN 29 1980

NINTH

