

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **MAR 6 1985**

date entered **APR 18 1985**

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

1. Name

historic

and/or common Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources

2. Location

street & number multiple addresses - refer to attached inventory forms. not for publication

city, town _____ vicinity of _____

state New York code 036 county New York; Queens codes 061; 081

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thematic group	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input 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 Multiple - refer to continuation sheet

street & number _____

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. refer to continuation sheet

street & number _____

city, town _____ state _____

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title New York Statewide Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records New York State Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Albany state New York

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources

Continuation sheet New York Co., NY Queens Item number 5 Page 2
Co., NY

Location of legal description:

(A), (B), (C), (D), (E)
New York County Register's Office
31 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

(F)
Queens County Register's Office
90-27 Sutphin Blvd.
Jamaica, NY 11435

7. Description

Refer to attached inventory forms.

Condition		Check one		Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site		
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed				

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

IDENTIFICATION

The Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources consist of six substantially intact cast-iron sidewalk clocks, significant as surviving representatives of a historically popular method of retail advertising and as objects of high artistic/architectural value. These six clocks, along with two other surviving but substantially altered and hence ineligible clocks, were identified as a result of ongoing survey efforts by the staff of the New York City Landmarks Commission. The survey area incorporates all five New York City boroughs (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx, and Staten Island). It is believed that the eight clocks inventoried are all that remain in New York City of a historically larger collection.

CRITERIA

For the purposes of this inventory, sidewalk clocks were defined as freestanding, independent objects standing fifteen to twenty feet in height and built with cast-iron cases. Clocks mounted on or located within buildings were not included in the inventory. Only those timepieces which satisfy the National Register criteria are included in the nomination. Specifically, the nominated clocks possess integrity of location and setting (defined in this instance as remaining on a sidewalk in the context of a commercial streetscape due to the frequent relocation of these clocks historically), integrity of design, materials and workmanship (allowing for internal mechanical alterations and altered clock dials modified to reflect changes in ownership) and the continuing ability of the clock in question to embody the distinctive characteristics of its type. Applying these criteria, the following six clocks are included in the thematic nomination:

COMPONENTS

Component A: Sidewalk Clock at 519 Third Avenue, Manhattan.
Component B: Sidewalk Clock at 1501 Third Avenue, Manhattan.
Component C: Sidewalk Clock at 200 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan.
Component D: Sidewalk Clock at 522 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan.
Component E: Sidewalk Clock at 783 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan.
Component F: Sidewalk Clock at 16111 Jamaica Avenue, Queens.

The remaining two clocks inventoried are the Sidewalk Clock at 753 Manhattan Avenue, Brooklyn, disqualified due to its completely redesigned dials and casing and extended height and the Sidewalk Clock at 3078 Steinway Street, Queens, which also features entirely new dials and dial casing, extended height, and the addition of a later sign above the clock. In each case, only the original pedestal and column survive.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources,

Continuation sheet New York Co., NY;

Item number 7

Page 2

Queens Co., NY

NOMINATED SITES

Each of the six intact resources is nominated as an isolated, independent object with boundaries defined as that portion of sidewalk occupied by the base of each clock as well as any adjacent portions of the sidewalk overhung by the dials or any projecting elements of the clock. Therefore, each of the six nominated properties is less than one acre in extent.

DESCRIPTION

The six nominated sidewalk clocks share several distinguishing characteristics including the uniform use of cast iron in their construction, a nearly uniform height of approximately fifteen feet, similar designs incorporating a base and pedestal, a column and capital, and a round dial housing with back to back clock dials. All are believed to have been built between 1880 and 1930, although dating these clocks specifically is particularly difficult since case designs were rarely changed from year to year and since recorded dates of installation do not necessarily reflect dates of manufacture. Originally, all of the nominated clocks were operated by weight-driven movements of a fairly standard design encased within the pedestal. The Seth Thomas Company and the E. Howard Company were principal manufacturers of these movements as well as of the cases in many instances. All of the clocks which continue to operate are now powered by electric movements although in at least two examples, Component E at 783 Fifth Avenue and Component D at 522 Fifth Avenue, the original clockworks are known to remain within the pedestal. Dials include both Arabic and Roman numerals and in half of the examples include an inscription identifying the owner or related business concern. Variations do occur in the styling of the cases, ranging from the widely popular E. Howard Clock Company design represented in Component E at 783 Fifth Avenue and characterized by its pedestal with bevelled upper corners and a relatively plain dial casing, to the unusually large (19 feet in height) and massive Seth Thomas Company design seen in Component D at 522 Fifth Avenue. Component B at 1501 Third Avenue incorporates a unique dial casing designed in the form of a pocket watch and placed atop an otherwise typical E. Howard Company column and pedestal. The clock at 200 Fifth Avenue, Component C, features an unusually sophisticated, Beaux-Arts style column and dial surround, manufactured by the Heda Iron Works in 1909 to complement the adjacent Beaux-Arts style Fifth Avenue Building. Manufacturers remain unidentified for two of the clocks; those at 519 Third Avenue, Component A, and 16111 Jamaica Avenue, Component F.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources,
Continuation sheet New York Co., NY; Item number 7
~~Queens Co., NY~~

Page 3

Of the later two, Component A resembles the typical E. Howard Company case design in its proportions and the shape of its column shaft. It differs from the typical examples of that type in its completely rectangular pedestal and its acanthus leaf column capital. Component F features a very unusual design incorporating a bell-cast shaped column base and an anthemion finial above the dial casing.

The individual components of the thematic group are described and illustrated on the accompanying Building-Structure Inventory forms.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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 c.1880-1930 **Builder/Architect** Noted where known on individual inventory forms.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources are significant as rare examples of a once popular method of retail store identification and advertising and as objects of high artistic and architectural significance which embody the distinctive characteristics of their type. Representing a period of significance of c.1880-c.1930, the six intact sidewalk clocks, five in Manhattan, one in Queens, illustrate a mode of advertising which served not only to identify and visually highlight the sponsoring business establishment, but also to provide a genuinely useful urban amenity to the public at large. As examples of cast-iron street furniture, these clocks are distinguished by their architectonic quality, many employing classical orders and decorative motifs in their design. Their human scale and rich detailing provide visual interest and a period character to the streets and sidewalks with which they are associated.

Sidewalks Clocks, also referred to as post clocks, were introduced to American cities in the mid-nineteenth century. Although they trace their mechanical ancestry to the great medieval tower clocks of Europe, the design and commercial use of timepieces within freestanding cast-iron cases appears to be a primarily American horological development. The first important manufacturer of these clocks in the United States, and perhaps the most prolific, was the E. Howard Company of Boston, established in 1842. Pioneers in the development of mass produced clocks and watches, the E. Howard Company marketed sidewalk clocks in company catalogues as early as the 1860's and 1870's. They later opened an office in New York City at 532 Broadway. One of their most popular models, best illustrated by Component E, was manufactured between c.1880 and 1930 and shipped to cities throughout the country. Of the six nominated sidewalk clocks in New York City, two have been identified as examples of their work (Components B and E). A third clock, Component A, bears a striking resemblance to clocks produced by the company; however, its manufacturer cannot be positively ascertained. A second important manufacturer of sidewalk clocks was the Seth Thomas Company of Thomaston Connecticut, established in 1853. The clock at 522 Fifth Avenue, Component D, is a fine example of their work dating from 1907. A third important sidewalk clock manufacturer supplying clocks primarily to West Coast cities was the Mayer Company, established in Seattle in 1897.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources,
Continuation sheet New York Co., NY; Item number 8 Page 2
Queens Co., NY

All of the six nominated sidewalk clocks are significant as distinctive examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century design and craftsmanship in cast iron. Handled in much the same way as late nineteenth century cast-iron architectural components, the clocks are similar in scale and degree of detailing. All of the clocks recall architectural styles popular in American cities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Components B, E and F feature column and pedestal designs with characteristic crocket capitals often associated with Victorian Gothic commercial buildings. Component A is similar, but features a capital with more classical acanthus leaves. Component C, with its case cast in 1909 by the Hecla Iron Works, exemplifies the proportions and fine details typical of Beaux-Arts classicism, especially popular in the commercial architecture of the early 1900's. Details include a Composite order column and a wreath-encircled dial casing surmounted by a cartouche. Component F reflects a similar classical inspiration, incorporating an arabesque-detailed column base and a crowning anthemion finial as does Component D, built in 1907, which features console brackets, acanthus leaf detailed dial casing and a pineapple finial. All of the clocks nominated demonstrate a degree of refinement befitting of their intended prominence in commercial streetscapes.

As an advertising medium, particularly for jewelry stores and financial institutions, sidewalk clocks appear to have reached the peak of their popularity during the first two decades of the twentieth century. By 1920, these clocks had become prominent features along several important retailing streets in New York City, particularly along Fifth Avenue. No statistics are available to indicate the actual number of sidewalk clocks in New York historically; however, it is believed that the six intact examples nominated represent a small proportion of what was originally a fairly large set. The popularity of freestanding cast-iron sidewalk clocks waned after the 1930's as city streets became increasingly vehicularized and as newer forms of advertising and signage, particularly neon lighting, became more effective and fashionable. By the 1950's, sidewalk clocks came to be regarded by many as old-fashioned and obsolete, and many were removed in the name of beautification, modernization and improved pedestrian circulation. Some clocks disappeared due to business relocations and others have been lost as a result of traffic accidents and acquisition by clock collectors. Few such clocks remain in American cities today. It is believed that New York City, with six, and Seattle, with ten, have the largest intact

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources

Continuation sheet New York Co., NY; Item number 8 Page 3
Queens Co., NY

collections of these timepieces in the nation. Both cities have recognized the historical and architectural significance of their remaining sidewalk clocks through local designation as landmarks. Listing on the National Register will reinforce the growing concern and interest in the continued preservation of New York City's intact surviving sidewalk clocks.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources,
Continuation sheet New York Co., NY: Item number 9
Queens Co., NY

Page 1

New York. Friends of Cast Iron Architecture. Research files.

New York. Landmarks Preservation Commission. Research files: Street Clocks.

Seattle. Landmarks Preservation Board. Research files: Street Clocks.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources

Continuation sheet New York Co., NY; Queens Item number 11 . Page 2
Co., NY

Research and Draft information provided by:

Virginia Kurshan
Landmarks Preservation Commission
20 Vesey Street
New York, NY 10007
(212) 566-7577

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory--Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Sidewalk Clocks of New York City Thematic Resources
State New York

Cover [Signature] 4/18/85

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Sidewalk Clock 161-11 Jamaica Avenue

Substantive Review

for Keeper [Signature] 4/18/85

Attest

2. Sidewalk Clock at 519 3rd Avenue, Manhattan

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper [Signature] 4/18/85

Attest

3. Sidewalk Clock at 1501 3rd Avenue, Manhattan

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper [Signature] 4/18/85

Attest

4. Sidewalk Clock at 100 5th Avenue, Manhattan

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper [Signature] 4/18/85

Attest

5. Sidewalk Clock at 522 5th Avenue, Manhattan

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper [Signature] 4/18/85

Attest

6. Sidewalk Clock at 783 5th Avenue, Manhattan

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper [Signature] 4/18/85

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest