

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

780

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Hudson Theatre

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 139-141 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street

City or town: New York State: New York County: New York

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Ruth A. Peypont DBA/PO

Date

9/23/16

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

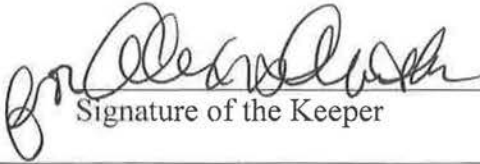
Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

  
Signature of the Keeper

11/15/00  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register           

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / theater

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / auditorium

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

---

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS (Beaux Arts/Classical Revival)

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL (STEEL & IRON)/STONE/BRICK

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

### Summary Paragraph

The Hudson Theatre is located at 139-141 West Forty-Fourth Street on Block 997, Lot 15 in New York, New York County in the heart of the city's Broadway Theater District.<sup>1</sup> The building is located on the north side of West Forty-Fourth Street, mid-block between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. The principal façade faces West Forty-Fourth Street, with the building's mass extending north and its rear elevation fronting West Forty-Fifth Street. There are no landscape features, including trees or shrubbery, surrounding the immediate site or nearby environment. The public sidewalks along West Forty-Fourth Street and West Forty-Fifth Street abut the façade and rear elevation. The Hudson Theatre is immediately surrounded by a mix of contemporary and historic residential, commercial, and retail buildings that are mostly much larger in scale. There are a few historic theater buildings similar in scale, such as the Belasco Theater, located to the east of the Hudson Theatre, and the Chatwal Hotel, directly across the street, also on West Forty-Fourth Street.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Broadway Theater District is not a historic district. It is the area in Midtown Manhattan where a huge concentration of the city's playhouses, movie theaters, and other places of entertainment are located. The boundaries are roughly West Thirty-Ninth Street to West Fifty-Ninth Street and between Sixth and Eighth Avenues.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

## Narrative Description

The five-bay, four-story theater building consists of various, mostly rectangular masses. In plan, the building is composed primarily of two rectangles: a narrow rectangular portion extends directly north of West Forty-Fourth Street, and then a larger, squarer component that holds the theater's auditorium, which connects and extends to West Forty-Fifth Street. Both elevations are faced in tan brick set in Flemish bond brick. The more decorative façade along West Forty-Fourth features a rusticated limestone base with ornament in the form of window and door surrounds, stringcourses, denticulated cornices, parapet, and other decorative molding details.

### ***Building: Exterior***

Hudson Theatre's façade is located on the north side of West Forty-Fourth Street. The design of the façade is attributed to J.B. McElpatrick, the principal of McElpatrick & Son. McElpatrick began the design of the Hudson Theatre, but the building was primarily completed by the architectural firm of Israels & Harder. The building's façade is five bays wide and four stories tall, and it is the only fully articulated elevation. When the symmetrical façade was constructed, it was consistent with the residential scale of its surrounding late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century environment. Designed in a variation of the classical base, shaft and capitol composition, the building's façade presents a one-two-one organization. The building's ground floor features rusticated limestone set on a granite foundation; the limestone visually creates a base for the building's "shaft," which is formed by the second and third story. This central portion is faced in tan brick coursed in Flemish bond and is defined by a decorative limestone cornice. The fourth story is capped by an ornate parapet that dominates the cornice below.

The five bays on the façade are articulated by a full-height, three bay wide slightly projecting central section. A wide opening at the base marks the central section. This opening is framed by smaller, secondary openings, set into the outer bay on either side. Each of these smaller entrances contains double-leaf, wood with glass panel doors that feature original brass hardware and kick plates. These secondary openings are deeply recessed and surrounded by limestone rustication. They are each surmounted by a bracketed cornice featuring stone cornucopia details that frame a bulls-eye window. The theater's main entrance, set within the wide opening at the central pavilion, is composed of three, double-leaf wood with glass panel doors that are surmounted by a wood transom. The center double-leaf door features a larger, curved door set within a wood scroll frame. The entry is capped by a highly decorative transom that features a centered circle window, framed by single-light openings on either side. The slightly raised and deeply recessed entry is sheltered by a replacement, metal marquee overhang that was installed circa 1990. The marquee is supported from tie rods connected at the same location of the metal fasteners for the original marquee at the third floor of the façade. A smooth beltcourse ornamented with small dentils defines the base of the ground floor, distinguishing it from the rest of the building.

The upper stories continue the central, projecting section; however, three tiers of windows are aligned vertically on each of the three upper stories within the bay with a single opening set into each of the outer bays. At the second and third stories, the central bay features four pilasters terminating in ornate capitals that feature stylized theatrical masks. The three central openings at the second story contain historic double-leaf, balcony doors fronted by decorative, wrought-iron balconies that feature lyres and

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

scrollwork. The outer openings within the central pavilion are capped by limestone panels and segmental-arched pediments supported by scrolled consoles. The center opening is surmounted by a paneled lintel ornamented with a sculptural male head, likely depicting the Greek God Apollo, swags, and a broken pediment featuring a lyre, which is also supported by scrolled consoles. The eastern and western most bays feature simple one-over-one, double-hung, wood windows set within full, limestone surrounds beneath raised, molded lintels.

The third story window openings are all smaller than those on the second story and feature identical limestone window surrounds; the openings within the central section are wider than those at the outer bays. Each window opening is covered by curvilinear, decorative wrought-iron grilles. The windows are all one-over-one, double-hung wood windows. These openings are set on limestone sills and capped by three, splayed keystones applied over a continuous molded limestone stringcourse. This stringcourse supports an entablature with a leaf-and-tongue molding and modillion cornice that features a limestone tablet inscribed "HUDSON" directly over the center, third-story window. The five window openings at the fourth story are similar to those on the third story; however, the three center bays of windows are defined by limestone quoining and rustication. Like the third story, all windows feature stone arches that are keyed to the masonry with lintels set on cornice below. On the three openings on the center pavilion, these lintels overlap the entablature that marks the fourth floor. Above these windows, a denticulated stone cornice supports a metal balustraded parapet. The parapet features piers at the end and center bays and supports an oval shield decorated with swags and foliage details at its center. Currently, the only visible cornice return is on the east elevation.

The secondary, north (rear) elevation of the building is visible along the south side of West Forty-Fifth Street and is simpler than the façade. The elevation is composed of tan brick coursed in Flemish bond and is less ornamented than the façade. The base is articulated by three, blind, seven-course rowlock brick arches with continuous impostes that form a beltcourse defining the second story. The two outer arches contain recessed openings: one features a blind opening, and the westernmost one features a large stage door. The upper level is defined by single and paired pilasters supported by paired corbelled, brick beltcourses and limestone bases that are capped with Corinthian capitals that feature stylized theatrical masks, similar to those on the façade. The pilasters are also flanked by recessed, brick panels. This elevation is capped by a large, metal cornice that features a reeded and medallioned frieze and block modillions. The cornice returns on both the east and west elevations.

The main mass of the rear elevation that holds the stage house is flanked by single-bay, five-story components that are part of the interior stage galleries. On the first floor these bays hold large, metal fire exit doors. On the upper floors, these bays feature single, leaf entrances and non-historic, one-over-one, double-hung wood windows set beneath cast stone lintels. The fifth-story window openings on either side are surmounted by arched transoms, supported by the cast stone lintels and set beneath a four-course, rowlock brick arch. These flanking masses feature a corbelled beltcourse above the fifth story windows and are capped by plain, limestone cornices. These windows can also be accessed by their wrought-iron fire escapes.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

***Building: Interior***

The interior of the Hudson Theatre is a combination of different sized volumes, floor heights, and number of floors, creating a varied space throughout the entire building. The basement level of the building is located entirely below grade, and was connected to adjacent buildings in 1990 and 1998; these connections are unrelated to the building's historic use. The basement facilitates operations and is divided by contemporary drywall and concrete block partitions into offices and circulation spaces. The first floor of the building is divided into three, single-height lobbies, the auditorium, a stage, and additional circulation and support spaces. The three lobbies on the ground floor, adjacent to West Forty-Fourth Street, include the entry lobby, ticket lobby, and inner lobby. The auditorium, towards the rear of the building and West Forty-Fifth Street, includes an orchestra level at the ground floor, two upper balconies, a stage, and stage galleries. The stage galleries that flank the stage extend higher than the larger, open volume of the auditorium. The existing second-floor is divided by contemporary partition walls into offices and mechanical rooms. Historically, it served as the Hudson Theatre's Dress Circle. In the section adjacent to West Forty-Fourth Street, the third and fourth floors each include a single apartment unit, accessed by a private stair adjacent to the entry vestibule along West Forty-Fourth Street.

The interior plan of the Hudson Theatre features a progression of expanding spaces that culminate in the large volume of the theater's auditorium. They interconnect to create a procession through the space, preparing patrons for the theater experience. The progression through the space serves as a transition between the busy Manhattan streets into the realm of the theater. The patron moves from the exterior of the theater on the public sidewalk along West Forty-Fourth Street into a narrow, one-story entry vestibule. The patron then walks through another set of doors into the one-story, verd-antique, green marble ticket lobby. The progression continues through another set of doors to the theater's inner lobby. The progression through the one-story vestibule and lobbies culminates in the theater's voluminous auditorium, which is framed by the two, stacked balconies. Secondary spaces include the dress circle on the second floor, and residential apartments on the third and fourth floor. Support spaces, including offices, dressing rooms, storage spaces, restrooms, and mechanical spaces are located at the sides and rear of the building, backstage, and in the theater's full basement. Compared to the rest of the theater, these spaces are minimal in their ornamentation.

The interior of the Hudson Theatre is ornamented in the same Beaux-Arts Classical aesthetic evoked by the exterior design. The design of the interior, including the auditorium and cantilevered balconies, is attributed to the firm of Israels & Harder, composed of principal architects Charles H. Israels and Julius F. Harder.

***Entry Vestibule***

The entry vestibule is accessed from the public sidewalk on West Forty-Fourth Street. Once inside the main entry, the narrow, rectangular vestibule functions as a transition space into the theater's ticket lobby. The space is finished with historic, verd-antique, green marble paneling that extends about two-thirds of the height of the walls. Currently, the space connects to the hotel entrances through non-historic doors on the west and east sides of the vestibule. These openings were added in 1989 with the

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

construction of the adjacent hotel. There are two stairs: one in the main area of the entry vestibule that accesses the second story dress circle and one on the east portion of the vestibule, through the replacement double-leaf doors that access the apartments on the third and fourth floors.

### ***Ticket Lobby***

The ticket lobby is a rectangular space that features several decorative architectural features in the form of paneling, molding, and bronze sculptural elements. The space is accessed from the entry vestibule by four, double-leaf, historic wood with glass panel doors that feature brass hardware and kick plates. The doors maintain their historic white marble thresholds and decorative screen transom windows. The ticket lobby features a two-window, box office, and a staircase to the theater's upper balcony level on the east wall. On the north wall, four, double-leaf, bronze with glass panel doors that feature a Greek key detailed frame provide access to the inner lobby. The set of doors is framed by a green marble surround. Each door is surmounted by decorative bronze transom that holds leaded glass lights.

The walls of the space are lined with the same gold-veined, verd-antique green marble paneling that extends the majority of the space. The marble terminates in a shallow cornice. Bronze Grecian Caryatids flank either side of each ticket window and support a subtle entablature. Above the marble is a wide plaster frieze adorned with a neoclassical foliage motif. Now painted white, it was originally painted a dark color or possibly gilded to appear as bronze. The ticket windows hold bronze frames that feature coffered bands at the top.

The ornate ceiling rises from a painted, shallow egg and dart ornamental plaster molding. The ceiling features 264 ornamented plaster coffers that once individually held incandescent light bulbs, providing light for the space. The ceiling no longer features these lights; two non-historic, brass and crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Inner Lobby***

The theater's inner lobby is a long rectangular space that is accessed from the south by the four, double-leaf, painted, bronze with glass panel doors that separate it from the ticket lobby. The north side of the space is open to the orchestra promenade in the southern portion of the adjacent auditorium, separated only by a non-historic red velvet curtain. The highly decorative lobby contains architectural features that include ornate plasterwork, large mirrors, and stained glass light fixtures.

The plaster walls are articulated by Corinthian pilasters and paneling. The space is also defined by three plaster arches on each of the east and west walls, five of which hold mirrors. The mirrors contribute to the grandiose feel of the space, giving it a perception that it is larger than it is. The pilasters support a plaster entablature. The arched spandrel panels, pilaster shafts, and entablature are adorned with

---

<sup>2</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," New York, New York, LP-1341, November 17, 1987, 18. The chandeliers in both the ticket lobby and inner lobby are listed as contributing to the interior landmark of the Hudson. However, historic photographs show that these features were not part of the theater's historic design.



Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

decorative plaster foliation. The southernmost arch on the east wall is an opening to stairwell that accesses the lower balcony. There is a fireplace beneath the center arch on the west wall. It features a verd-antique marble and cast-iron fire box decorated with stamped fleur-de-lis, the same green marble hearth, and neoclassical plaster surround.

The plaster ceiling is divided into three sections by wide bands of decorative plasterwork completed in Classical aesthetic. Each bay features a large, concave, stained-glass, dome light fixture designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany. The stained-glass domes feature a more modern aesthetic for the period, using geometric lights of yellow and green hues. The light fixtures are surrounded by shallow crystal light fixtures; there are ten total throughout the space. Additionally, three-light, stained-glass panels are located within the coffered edges of the ceiling. A non-historic brass and crystal chandelier that hangs from the center of the ceiling.

### ***Auditorium***

The procession through the vestibule and lobbies terminates in the auditorium, the most decorative space in the Hudson Theatre, set within the largest mass of the building. The auditorium is accessed from the open north wall of the inner lobby; the auditorium is on axis with the inner lobby, ticket lobby, and entry vestibule. The interior configuration of the auditorium consists of a space which is slightly wider than it is deep with two balconies, a proscenium arch that is flanked by double-height orchestra boxes, a sounding board, an orchestra promenade, balcony promenades, a ceiling, and a stage opening behind the proscenium arch. The auditorium continues, to a higher degree of detail, the Beaux-Arts, classically inspired aesthetic that is seen in the other public spaces of the theater. The auditorium is highly ornamented and features a vast amount of ornamental plaster in relief that is integrated into the surfaces which define the space's configuration.

Extending to the north, the ground floor of the auditorium is framed by the orchestra promenade, immediately adjacent to the inner lobby and the orchestra. A staircase rises from the west portion of the promenade to an enclosed stairwell that accesses the balcony levels. The rear wall of the orchestra promenade is paneled and features a combination of historic and replacement painted, ornamental plaster molding. Sometime in the late twentieth century, the women's lounge to the east of the inner lobby accessed from the orchestra promenade was enclosed and converted into restroom facilities. Three large columns pierce the space and divide the promenade and the orchestra space. Non-historic, late twentieth-century draperies also work to separate the two spaces. The ceiling above the promenade is divided into bays by ornamental plaster bands and moldings.

The orchestra features yellow painted, paneled side walls, like the rear wall of the promenade. The expansive volume of the auditorium is focused on the depressed proscenium arch on the north wall, from which a paneled sounding board extends and is supported by paired Composite engaged columns and pilasters that frame the orchestra boxes. The proscenium arch is composed of a wide paneled band with Greek key motifs that features green, orange, and yellow mosaic and mother of pearl tiles, which were also designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany. The arch molding is painted yellow and gold. The entire band is flanked by laurel-leaf, ornamental plaster moldings that once supported incandescent light bulbs across the width of the stage. Few of the light bulbs remain intact.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

The sounding board is outlined by foliate bands with molding, which create a deep cove. It is covered with hexagonal panels and was once entirely outlined by incandescent light bulbs that faced the stage. This lighting system is no longer used and only a few of the light bulbs remain. The sounding board is supported on either side by the orchestra boxes, which were previously removed and replaced with kitchens on the first floor to accommodate certain services for the event space. The now faux boxes rise to the level of the first balcony and feature curved fronts that have been painted to replicate the decorative mosaics on the balconies and proscenium. Each box is also flanked by paired, fluted, engaged columns and pilasters that feature Corinthian capitals. These support an entablature with a foliated frieze, denticulated cornice, and cresting. A panel is also set into the frieze that features the historic Tiffany tile work. The stage extends behind the proscenium arch, towards the northernmost exterior wall of the theater. The ceiling rises from groined sections and is flat with ornamental plasterwork.

There are two balcony levels that rise to frame the large volume of the southern portion of the auditorium space. Both balconies also feature promenades to the south that are separated from the seats by paneled, standing half-walls. The balconies can be accessed by two stairs, on either side of the balconies, and additional fire stairs on that flank the auditorium. The balconies feature similar ornamentation to the rest of the auditorium. The side walls of both balconies feature paneled pilasters. The undersides of the balconies are adorned with foliated bands of ornamental plaster. The undersides of the balconies also feature non-historic dome light fixtures. Corinthian columns support the second floor balcony. The balcony fronts are paneled and outlined by wood molding. They are also painted yellow and gold and are adorned with the Tiffany mosaic tiles seen on the proscenium.

The ornate ceiling is framed by wide bands of ornamental plaster and octagonal panels that rise from the side walls of the upper balcony to create groined sections. These panels are adorned with neoclassical foliation surrounding figures. The ceiling ornament culminates with the neoclassical, paneled plasterwork that holds the several light bulbs that work to illuminate the auditorium from the upper balcony. This historic lighting system consists of several glazed bulbs; some of them still retain their historic etched glass globes and crystal pendants. The controls for the system, which were once backstage, no longer remain.

### ***Basement***

The basement level of the Hudson Theatre has been greatly altered and retains very little historic fabric. The basement encompasses the entire building footprint, including a portion beneath West Forty-Fifth Street, and is currently used as support spaces for the staff of the adjacent hotel. The basement level can be accessed by five staircases and the elevator from the ground floor of the theater and two doors that connect to the adjacent hotel.

The only existing historic fabric is found in a few masonry walls located beneath the stage and auditorium. The majority of the basement offices and support spaces feature replacement doors, gypsum board walls, CMU block, and late-twentieth-century flooring. Parts of the ceilings are covered by dropped, acoustic-tile ceilings, and other parts are left exposed to the piping and wiring strung above.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

### ***Upper Levels***

The existing second story dress circle level exists above the first floor lobbies and entry vestibule. It is only accessed by the stair on the interior of the entry vestibule. Currently, it functions as offices for the hotel and features no historic fabric. The space has gypsum board partition walls, dropped, acoustical-tile ceiling, doors, and carpeted flooring. In the late 1980s or early 1990s, a stair was put in on the east wall, connecting the offices with the hotel. The historic balcony doors on the south wall remain.

The third and fourth floor levels on the southern portion of the theater building each feature a single residential apartment unit. The apartments are accessed by the stair on the east side of the entry vestibule. The apartments have not been inhabited for many years and are in poor condition. They do retain some historic fabric, including wood floors and trim, wall finishes, fire places, windows, decorative leaded-glass windows, and some light fixtures.

### ***Assessment of Integrity***

The Hudson Theatre retains a high level of historic integrity including its design, materials, workmanship, location, and feeling.<sup>3</sup> The exterior of the Hudson Theatre reflects the building's historic design and materials, particularly its prominent limestone and brick masonry façade along with its original building form and footprint. The historic marquee has been replaced with a late-twentieth-century marquee that closely replicates both the aesthetic and configuration of its historic counterpart but has a slightly different design. The replacement marquee is supported by four tie rods that connect to the façade in the same locations as the historic marquee. Also, all variations of signage that was once attached to the façade to advertise the theater and its productions has been removed. A substantial portion of the theater is remarkably intact, including marble stairs, doors, ornate wall finishes and molding, original Louis Comfort Tiffany light fixtures and mosaic tiles, decorative ceilings, pilasters, the proscenium arch, and the plaster sounding board. During a restoration in 2005, the historic Tiffany tiles that decorate the theater's auditorium were discovered beneath non-historic plasterwork and restored.

The theater's interior retains sufficient integrity to convey the architect's intention to create richly ornamental spaces of a grand scale and with lavish color and material palettes. Further, the retention of these materials and the workmanship required to present such a high-style design reflects the building's historic function and the technologies and supplies available when it was constructed in 1902-1903. The building's intentional and continual location in the Broadway Theater District contributes to its degree of integrity. Although the building's function continually changed after the 1930s, it remains a symbol of the evolution of the Times Square neighborhood.

---

<sup>3</sup> Craig T. Morrison, *Theaters* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 382. Legitimate theater is defined as a theater designed, equipped, and operated for the presentation of spoken or musical drama rather than vaudeville, burlesque, variety, or moving pictures. Although throughout its history it was used for other types of performances, the Hudson Theatre was historically designed as a legitimate theater.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

---

## 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
ENTERTAINMENT  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1902-1965  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1902-03  
1934  
1950

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

J.B McElpatrick & Son (architect)  
Israels & Harder (architect)  
George G. Heye (owner)

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Constructed between 1902 and 1903, the Hudson Theatre is significant under Criterion A in the area of entertainment for its association with Henry B. Harris's theatrical empire and the development and influence of the Broadway Theater District. One of the few remaining early twentieth-century playhouses within Manhattan's Broadway Theater District, the Hudson helps to illustrate the growth and development of the Broadway Theater District, as well as the history of American theater across the country. Although the theater's use has changed over the years, alternating between a playhouse and other types of entertainment, including a recording and television venue, the building has been an anchor to the area's early past for over a hundred years.

Renowned producer and theater manager Henry B. Harris grew up in theater management and moved to New York City soon after the turn of the twentieth century. With the financial assistance of Wall Street banker George G. Heye, he built the Hudson Theatre in 1902 as his New York headquarters. With the premier performance of *Cousin Kate* on October 19, 1903 to final performances of *Eight Bells* in November of 1933, the Hudson Theatre served as home to a countless number of productions.<sup>4</sup> Harris bought the Hudson in 1908 and went on to open two other New York City theaters (no longer extant). At the height of his career, he managed as many as 16 touring companies and 11 individual stars in addition to his theaters. Following Henry Harris's death in 1912 on the *RMS Titanic*, Harris's wife, Irene, operated the Hudson Theatre and it became one of the most successful Broadway playhouses in the 1920s; and even it later presented some of Broadway's most memorable theatrical successes.

The Hudson Theatre is additionally significant under Criterion C for its Beaux-Arts design, reflective of the evolution of theater design. The building was initially designed by prominent theater architects J.B. McElfatrick & Son and completed by the active New York firm of Israels & Harder. Its façade along West Forty-Fourth Street reflects a restrained but elegant portrayal of the Beaux-Arts Classical aesthetic popular at the turn of the century. The design of the theater reflects several architectural and technical innovations that were being developed during this era, advancing the design of the building type. The elongated forms of the auditorium and proscenium arch paired with the cantilevered balconies provided unobstructed sightlines from every seat, not just the most expensive ones. This concept revolutionized the design of twentieth-century entertainment venues, separating them from their nineteenth-century counterparts. The use of spacious lobbies to create the processional entry predated their general popularity in theatre design by decades. The finishes in the interior of the theater that created a rich and lavish setting for patrons, complete with velvet curtains, verd-antique green marble paneling, and Tiffany light fixtures and mosaics to entertain guests during intermissions stand as hallmarks of theater interior design. The period of significance begins with the building's construction in 1902 and ends in 1965, to reflect its long history of use both as a playhouse and its later modification for other types of entertainment, recording, and performance.

---

<sup>4</sup> "Amusements—Manhattan," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 8, 1933, Newspapers.com (Accessed July 20, 2015). The last show before the Hudson was used by CBS was *Eight Bells*. The show opened on October 28, 1933 and ran for seventeen shows. The advertisement on November 8, 1933 is the latest record found for the show.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

---

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

***Broadway Theater District***

The Broadway Theater District, located in midtown Manhattan, encompasses one of the largest concentrations of playhouses in the world and the largest in the country. These theaters, dating as early as the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, are significant for their influences and contributions not only to the history of theater in New York City, but for their impact nationwide on theater design. There are two main catalysts that generated the development of the Broadway Theater District around Times Square at the end of the nineteenth century: the northward shift of Manhattan's population facilitated by the extension of the city's mass transportation and the expansion of New York's role in the American theater industry.<sup>5</sup> The northward movement of the Manhattan Island's residential, commercial, and entertainment districts had been occurring at a constant rate throughout the nineteenth century. In the early portion of the century, businesses, stores, hotels, and entertainment venues had clustered together in lower Manhattan. As the city's various businesses moved northward, they began to isolate themselves in separate areas. The financial institutions remained downtown, while the larger retail stores became established north of Fourteenth Street and eventually moved to Herald Square and Fifth Avenue. Hotels, which initially were located near the larger retail stores, began to cluster around major transportation centers and corridors such as Grand Central Terminal and Fifth Avenue.<sup>6</sup>

The theaters, like the hotels, initially existed near the major retail stores along lower Broadway for the majority of the nineteenth century. The theater district gradually progressed northward up Broadway: first to Union Square, then Madison Square, and finally Herald Square. By the end of the nineteenth century, intuitive theater managers had begun to extend the district even farther north along Broadway. They reached as far north as what was historically known as Long Acre Square, today's Times Square.

The early-nineteenth-century farmlands of Long Acre Square had, by the turn of the century, transitioned into a hub of mass transportation. As early as the 1860s, a horse car line had run across Forty-Second Street. The 1871 opening of Grand Central Depot and the completion of the Third and Sixth Avenue elevated railways, made it easy for both New York City residents and visitors to visit Long Acre Square. Transportation continued to be a significant factor for the development of the area. In 1904, following the *New York Times'* relocation to the area, Long Acre Square was renamed Times Square. That same year, the city's subway system was inaugurated, with a major station located at Forty-Second Street and Broadway.<sup>7</sup> The concentration of mass transportation systems and the accessibility of Times Square made it the obvious location for the city's growing playhouses. In 1916, the city's zoning board officially designated the area as New York's entertainment sector.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," New York, New York, LP-1340, November 17, 1987, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 2.

<sup>8</sup> Morrison, *Broadway Theaters*, i.

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

Many of the theater businesses established in Long Acre Square in the late nineteenth century were complex theater operations that originated in the 1860s when the stock system, the traditional method of running a theater, was challenged by the growing popularity of touring combination shows.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the stock system, where a theater manager employed a company of actors for a season and presented them in a variety of plays, the combination system consisted of a company of actors appearing in a single show that toured nationally.<sup>10</sup> These travelling shows provided their own scenery, costumes, and sometimes even musical accompaniment. This system eventually became more successful than the stock system, promoted by the interest in a variety of entertainment and assisted by the expansion of the nation's railroads after the end of the Civil War.

Crucial to the operation of the touring system was a single location where the shows could be cast, rehearsed, tested, and then booked for a national tour. Since New York was already regarded as the most significant theater city in the country, it naturally became the headquarters for the companies that relied on this business model.<sup>11</sup> Also close to the theater district were several boarding houses that catered to the hundreds of performers who came to New York in the hopes of being employed by a touring show or a local production.

The northward shift of the theater district along Broadway had continued at a steady pace through the end of the nineteenth century. The Casino Theater (demolished in 1930) was opened on the southeast corner of Broadway and Thirty-Ninth Street in 1882.<sup>12</sup> A year later, it was joined by the ambitious Metropolitan Opera House (demolished in 1967) on Broadway between Thirty-Ninth and Fortieth Streets. Over the next two decades several other theaters were erected in the Times Square vicinity.

In 1895 Oscar Hammerstein I built a "colossal amusement enterprise" encompassing an entire block on Broadway between Forty-Fourth and Forty-Fifth Streets, known as the Olympia (demolished in 1935).<sup>13</sup> This was the first major theater in Long Acre Square. Later that year, on November 25, 1895, Hammerstein opened the Lyric Theater section of the building and less than four weeks later he inaugurated the Music Hall. The Olympia was never successful and, unfortunately, closed its doors two years after it opened. However, its vision and scale earned Hammerstein the title of "Father of Times Square."<sup>14</sup>

In 1903, over 3,000 playhouses, not counting concert halls or smaller variety theaters, existed across the "theater-building mad" country. An additional 300 were built that same year.<sup>15</sup> Nearly 5 percent of the theaters built that year were built in greater New York City. Between the years 1901 and 1920, a total of forty-three additional theaters, including the Hudson Theatre, appeared in midtown Manhattan, the majority of them in the side streets east and west of Broadway.<sup>16</sup> Building on the side streets was

<sup>9</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> William Morrison, *Broadway Theaters: History and Architecture* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc. 1999), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 3.

<sup>15</sup> "Craze for Theater Building Now Rages throughout the Land: 300 Playhouses under Construction, an Increase of 10 Per Cent," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 15, 1903, Newspapers.com

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

cheaper than building on the main thoroughfare of Broadway and this resulted in many so-called "Broadway" theaters to prefer locations along the side streets. The few that are on Broadway incorporated office buildings, or other additional means of income, in order to pay for the premier location. When asked to comment about the craze of theater-building across the country, prominent theater architect William McElfrick, the first architect of the Hudson Theatre and son of noted theater designer J.B. McElfrick, replied that:

Just what is responsible for the present theater building mania would be hard to say. Whether it is the long continued national prosperity or the increasing national frivolity is a question. Probably a little bit of both. The national prosperity is probably reflected in the theatrical prosperity, which having lasted for several years has placed the managers in a position to build. Every manager, as soon as he gets well out of the woods and thinks he sees daylight ahead, not merely a glimmer, but good broad sunlight, you know, wants to build a theater for himself, just as every man as soon as he feels that he can afford it wants to build his own home after his own notions. It's a natural human instinct...[a theater] is built to supply a definite demand, because the people want more theater accommodation and are ready to pay for it...Perhaps it is prosperity; perhaps it is frivolity; probably it is one growing out of the other. The people can afford to be frivolous. Certain it is that people who didn't go to the theater once in six months fifteen or twenty years ago go on an average once a week now.<sup>17</sup>

Several different factors converged to create Times Square as one of the world's greatest theater districts and were ultimately a catalyst for the hundreds of theaters that were built in the area. A portion of the theater-building activity was motivated by the competition between two major forces in the industry, the Theatrical Syndicate and the Shubert brothers, for control of the national performance network. As each side isolated their playhouses from outside managing companies, the other was forced to build more theaters to house their attractions.<sup>18</sup> As McElfrick noted, the influence of America's prosperity, which not only created millionaires but also solidified a good living to a growing middle class, led to the significant growth of the industry nationally. Next, Times Square's accessibility by public transportation brought thousands of people to the area every day and night. And ultimately, combining the first two factors with the city's exponential growing population in the early twentieth century resulted in an explosion of theater construction in New York and, ultimately, across the country.<sup>19</sup>

Following World War I the number of travelling shows declined while New York's local theatrical activity continued to increase. The general economic prosperity during this time assisted in the construction of an additional thirty playhouses in and around Times Square, expanding the boundaries of the district. By this time, the district's boundaries reached just west of Eight Avenue to Sixth Avenue and from Thirty-Ninth Street north to Columbus Circle.<sup>20</sup> At its peak during the 1920s, Broadway's array of playhouses, opera houses, movie palaces, concert halls, and theaters could, and very often did, accommodate more than 160,000 patrons on a single evening.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "Craze for Theater Building Now Rages throughout the Land," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

<sup>18</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 4.

<sup>19</sup> Morrison, *Broadway Theaters*, i.

<sup>20</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 4.

<sup>21</sup> Morrison, *Broadway Theaters*, i.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

The Stock Market Crash of 1929, and the Great Depression that followed, caused a significant decline in theater activity. Performances were only accessible to upper class patrons, and even then were seen as superfluous spending. As a result, several playhouses were torn down. Many were converted to motion picture houses and, later, like the Hudson Theatre, to radio or television studios. No new theaters were constructed in the Broadway Theater District from the onset of the Great Depression until the 1960s.<sup>22</sup> Although many theaters have been demolished in the last century, the theaters that survive represent a wide variety of types and aesthetic and together embody a significant portion of New York's prolific theatrical history. The Hudson Theatre survives as a significant example of that vast theatrical history of New York and its Broadway Theater District.

### ***Evolution of Theater Design***

The rapid construction of theaters throughout the entire country during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought on new innovations to the way they were designed and ornamented. At the end of the nineteenth century, American theaters were still being built in the style of traditional European opera houses.<sup>23</sup> This included high proscenium arches, narrow auditoriums, three or more balconies with a horseshoe configuration, and several boxes flanking the stage with portions blocking the lower balcony levels. This configuration represented a more stratified design that reflected economic and racial classes of the patrons. The seats with the best views were reserved for those who could afford them while the lower class and African-American theater-goers, regardless of their ability to pay, were forced into seats that had obstructed views and impaired acoustics.<sup>24</sup>

The increase of theater construction after the turn of the century also inspired innovations in theater architectural design and decoration. Theater architects began to plan the playhouse's exterior and interior as a single, integrated design. American theater architects, still most likely influenced by their European counterparts, began to alter several conceptual components of their designs. Proscenium arches were configured to be lower and wider, auditoriums were made shallower, balcony and box numbers reduced, and their seating configured in a fan-shape.<sup>25</sup> This reconfiguration allowed for a more democratic seating arrangement, maximizing sightlines throughout the entire theater. The theater building type also provided a means for the exploration of new technologies during the era. Theater architects and engineers were challenged to develop lighting and temperature control systems that eventually paved the way for the systems still in use today.

Safety was also a major component of a theater's design. A fire at the Chicago Iroquois Theater in December 1903 was responsible for over 600 fatalities.<sup>26</sup> Although this devastating fire came after the requirement that theaters provide sufficient egress, fire drills and how the public accessed these exits was not enforced. In theaters across the county, exits were poorly marked and patrons were virtually unaware of their locations and configurations. This fire changed how theater owners and architects

<sup>22</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 4.

<sup>23</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 4.

<sup>24</sup> Morrison, *Theaters*, 12-16.

<sup>25</sup> "Changes in Opera House," *New York Times*, November 21, 1903, Newspapers.com

<sup>26</sup> "Fire Drill in Theaters," *New York Times*, January 2, 1904, Newspapers.com

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

prioritized the overall safety of theater patrons. Hudson architect Charles H. Israels stated in response to the Iroquois Theater fire that most modern theaters, like the Hudson, are “adequately provided with exits, with which the audience is thoroughly unfamiliar, and which are used so seldom that the employees are unused to having the audience pass out through them.” He argued that:

A municipal ordinance [should require] every theater in New York to use all of its emergency exits at the end of each performance [to ensure] a daily fire drill which would make the staff of the theater thoroughly competent to handle the crowd in time of panic and would educate the public so that they themselves would be familiar with the position and number of the exits.<sup>27</sup>

As several of New York’s turn-of-the-century theaters were built during the period in which the city acted as the beginning for most nationwide tours, they represent a style of theater architecture that was a model not only for the entire city, but for the entire country. Since a show that was originally produced in a New York theater would require similar conditions while it was produced on the road, new ideas in theater design spread and were adapted across the country. Also critical to the emphasis of New York theater design on the rest of the country, many producers and theater owners would hire the same architects that designed their Broadway theaters to design their theaters across the country. Therefore, the evolving design ideals of American theater design in the late eighteenth and early twentieth century that were developed by New York architects, producers, and owners, were transferred throughout the country, to the other cities and towns that would experience specific shows and theater companies. Ultimately, the New York theater environment was the single most significant catalyst for American theater design and the city’s examples during this era set the standard architecturally, aesthetically, and technically, for the building type.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Henry B. and Irene Harris***

Henry B. Harris, a well-known theater manager and producer responsible for the operation of three major Broadway theaters and several traveling companies, was born into a prominent theatrical family, on December 1, 1866 in St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>29</sup> His father William Harris was a theatrical manager and producer who would eventually become associated with New York City’s prominent theatrical syndicate Klaw & Erlanger.<sup>30</sup> When Henry was still a boy, the Harris family moved from St. Louis to Boston, Massachusetts. There he received his first theatrical training working for the Howard Athenaeum. Once he left the Howard Athenaeum, he formed and became partner in the firm Rich & Harris. The firm remained active in Boston for several years and its successes laid the foundations of his future on Broadway. At this time, he managed several well-known stars, including May Irwin, Pete Dailey, and Lillie Langtry, in a number of successful plays. In 1900, Harris produced a play with Amelia Bingham as the leading female role called *The Climbers*. The success of the play led Harris to move to New York City the following year and was a catalyst for the success of his Broadway career.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, “Hudson Theatre,” 4.

<sup>29</sup> “Obituary- Henry B. Harris,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1912, Newspapers.com.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

Some of his early Broadway productions include *Soldiers of Fortune*, *The Traveling Salesman*, and *The Third Degree*. He is also responsible for launching the career of top Broadway star Robert Edeson. Construction began on the Hudson Theatre by the original owner, Wall Street banker and prominent collector of Native American artifacts, George G. Heye in 1902.<sup>32</sup> Harris, who initially had a twenty-one year lease on the theater, was part of the theater's design and development from the beginning.<sup>33</sup> As manager of the Hudson, he intended the theater to be the permanent New York home for the actors under his employ. He leased the theater from Heye until he purchased it from him on April 1, 1908 for \$700,000.<sup>34</sup> At the time of the purchase, Harris managed eleven productions and seven Broadway stars.<sup>35</sup>

In 1906, Harris acquired the Hackett Theater (demolished in 1997), originally the Lew M. Fields Theater, built for Oscar Hammerstein I at 254 West Forty-Second Street for \$400,000.<sup>36</sup> The theater was the setting for one of Harris's most successful plays, *The Lion and the Mouse*. The play was so successful that during one season it was being presented by four road companies simultaneously. In 1911, the Hackett was renamed the Harris Theater and was managed by Henry's younger brother, William Harris, Jr.<sup>37</sup>

Henry B. Harris's third theater was a combination musical hall and restaurant known as the Folies Bergere (demolished in 1982) at 210 West Forty-Sixth Street. Designed for him by architects Herts & Tallant in 1910, it featured moveable dinner tables in the orchestra and box circle area. The hall's balcony and grand circle had seats for patrons who were there solely to see the show. Unfortunately, this new concept did not prove popular with the theater-going public and the theater failed in less than six months.<sup>38</sup> Although unsuccessful, the realization of the Folies exhibited Harris's innovation and commitment to his exploratory nature. The Folies was renamed the Fulton Theater and was reopened featuring legitimate stage productions.

Harris was president of the Henry B. Harris Company from 1901 until his death in 1912. The company had offices on the second level of the Hudson Theatre. During this time he not only managed the Hudson and his other theater ventures, but also managed a number of touring companies and several major stars, including Helen Ware and Robert Edeson. He was known to have as many as sixteen individual theater companies on tour during one season. Harris also was president of the National Producing Managers of America, Director of the Theater Mangers' Association of Greater New York, Treasurer of the Actors' Fund of America, and Trustee of the Hebrew Infant Asylum of New York.

---

<sup>32</sup> John Alden Mason, *George G. Heye, 1874-1957* (New York: Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation, 1958). George Gustav Heye only spent thirteen years as a banker. Heye is most well-known for his contribution of his extensive collection of Native American artifacts and work to establish the Museum of the American Indian and the Heye Foundation. Since 1989, his collection has belonged to the Smithsonian Institution and led to the creation of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

<sup>33</sup> "Work Begun on a New Theater," *New-York Tribune*, April 3, 1902, Newspapers.com

<sup>34</sup> "Another New Theater," *New-York Tribune*, January 17, 1902, Newspapers.com

<sup>35</sup> "Harris Buys the Hudson," *New York Times*, April 2, 1908, Newspapers.com.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> "Concerning H.B. Harris," *New York Times*, April 21, 1912, Newspapers.com

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

In 1912, Harris and his wife, Irene Harris, toured Europe and booked their return to New York via the White Star liner *RMS Titanic*. Irene survived the disaster, suffering only from a fall on the ship's grand staircase, but Henry Harris perished at sea. At the time of his death, Harris was responsible for the operation of the Hudson Theatre, Hackett Theater, and Fulton Theater as well as several traveling production companies. The *New York Times* and *New-York Tribune* listed him amongst the most prominent passengers on board, along with Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Astor, Mrs. and Mr. B. Guggenheim, and Isidor Straus.<sup>39</sup>

His theaters closed for one night following the Titanic disaster in mourning. Harris died at the peak of his relatively short, but extremely successful career and was spared the fate of many of his contemporaries who saw their theatrical empires destroyed by the Great Depression. He was described as being a very well-liked individual, even by his competition. His character can also be inferred from the loyalty of the actors and actresses he managed that "remained under his management from production to production, contented with what he had to offer them."<sup>40</sup> Although the press anticipated the Henry B. Harris Company to be managed by Harris's general manager, James Forbes, or his younger brother, William Harris, Jr., following his death his wife Irene took over managing the company.

Born on June 1, 1876 in Washington, D.C., Irene "Rene" Wallach married Harris in October of 1899. Throughout their marriage, Harris relied heavily on his wife's opinion and "always consulted her before accepting a play, [because he was] a firm believer in the value of woman's point of view regarding theatrical matters."<sup>41</sup> Mrs. Harris had never been on stage and admitted all of her knowledge of the theater business was gained through association with him. She stated that her husband "took [her] into his closest confidence, and all his plans and ideas about the theater were known to [her]. But there were many things [she] did not know in the early days."<sup>42</sup> Aware of her limited knowledge and amateur status in the theatrical business, after her husband's death, Irene Harris produced plays under the name "Estate of Henry B. Harris." She acknowledged that her husband left her with a well-organized staff that remained extremely loyal. For eight years she practiced directing and producing productions, she "[schooled] herself in the practical things of play production," and in January 1920 felt that she had gained enough experience to use her own name to support her own production. Her first individual production took place at the Fulton Theater and was entitled *Big Game*, written by Willard Robertson and Kilbourn Gordon. Irene Harris was a very practical yet conservative producer who only produced plays that were "clean and wholesome." Her personal enjoyment was not her test for success; instead she used intuition to determine if that the public would appreciate a production. Although urged by many to give up producing, as she did not need the income, she remained in the business for almost a decade after her husband's death.<sup>43</sup>

In the late 1920s, Mrs. Harris was reportedly offered 1.2 million dollars for the Hudson Theatre by a developer who wanted to construct an office building on the site. She refused, as she did not want to sell her husband's legacy. Irene Harris leased the Hudson to Howard Schnebbe in the late 1920s, where

<sup>39</sup> "Obituary- Henry B. Harris," April 16, 1912.

<sup>40</sup> "Concerning H.B. Harris," April 21, 1912.

<sup>41</sup> "Obituary- Henry B. Harris," April 16, 1912.

<sup>42</sup> Silas B Fishkind, "A Woman Unafraid," *New-York Tribune*, January 25, 1920, Newspapers.com

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

he and Henry Harris's brother William continued to produce theatrical productions.<sup>44</sup> Sadly, as the effect of the Great Depression led to the forced closing of hundreds of theaters across the country, the Hudson, too, was forced to close in 1934. Irene Harris passed away in September 1969.

### ***J.B. McElfatrick & Son***

George G. Heye, a Wall Street banker and investor, initially hired the well-known firm of J.B. McElfatrick & Son to design the Hudson Theatre. Although the firm produced the initial drawings that were filed in 1902 with the original building permit, by January 1903 the project had been taken over, for unknown reasons, by the firm of Israels & Harder.<sup>45</sup> The firm of McElfatrick & Son specialized in theater architecture and designed over two hundred theaters in over ninety cities around the country. The Hudson Theatre was one of the firm's sixty New York theater commissions, but appears to be the only one that is associated with the firm that survives in the Broadway Theater District today.<sup>46</sup>

John Bailey McElfatrick was born in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, just outside the state's capitol city of Harrisburg, in 1826.<sup>47</sup> As a young man he moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, to pursue a career as a carpenter and architect. As McElfatrick's practice grew with his early commissions, such as the Grand Opera House in Detroit and the National Theater in Washington, he and his sons, John M. and William H. McElfatrick, who eventually became his partners, moved around the Midwest for the next several years.<sup>48</sup> After working in Louisville and St. Louis, the firm moved to New York City in 1884. Its first known New York City commission was the Broadway Theater (demolished in 1929) at the intersection of Broadway and Forty-Fourth Street. Completed in 1888, the Broadway Theater was one of the few nineteenth-century theaters within a close enough proximity to Long Acre Square to become part of the Broadway Theater District after the turn of the century.

McElfatrick & Son designed some of the most influential Broadway theaters. The firm was known for its innovation and progressive designs, including consideration of sight lines and use of acoustic plans, and the McElfatricks' work became the foundation on which American theater design of the era was based.<sup>49</sup> In 1892, the firm was commissioned to design the Empire Theater (demolished 1953) and connecting office building on West Forty-First Street for legendary entertainer Charles Frohman. Boasting a one-hundred-foot lobby, enhanced fireproof construction, and electrical lighting, the Empire was one of Broadway's best-known theaters.

---

<sup>44</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 14.

<sup>45</sup> New York City Department of Buildings, Permit No. 150, dated March 25, 1902. The original permit, filed on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1902, lists McElfatrick & Son as the architect. According to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission landmarks designation filed November 17, 1987, a revised permit was found. The original permit only features a schedule of structural members and a plan for fire escapes by McElfatrick & Son. All of the rest of the plans are labeled "Revised by Israels & Harder," and stamped "Received Jan 7, 1903."

<sup>46</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 9.

<sup>47</sup> Byrne David Blackwood, "The Theaters of J.B. McElfatrick and Sons, Architects, 1855-1922" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1966), 13.

<sup>48</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 9.

<sup>49</sup> "Architect Dies at Work," *New-York Tribune*, June 7, 1906, Newspapers.com

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

In 1892, McElfatrick & Son designed Oscar Hammerstein's first Manhattan Opera House on Twenty-Fourth Street, located between Broadway and Seventh Avenue. In 1895 the firm was commissioned to design one of Hammerstein's most extravagant theaters, the Olympia (demolished 1935). It occupied an entire block, fronting along the east side of Broadway between West Forty-Fourth and Forty-Fifth Streets, in Times Square. Envisioned as a "palace of entertainment," the Olympia included two theaters—the Music Hall and the Lyric—as well as a roof garden, bowling alley, cafes, and restaurants.<sup>50</sup>

Although the Olympia failed as a successful business, closing after only two years of operation, Hammerstein continued to commission McElfatrick & Son to design his theaters. The Hudson was one of McElfatrick & Son's few commissions in or around Times Square that was not connected to Hammerstein. Other local theaters designed by the firm included the Harlem Auditorium (1903) at 126<sup>th</sup> Street and Seventh Avenue, the Broadway Theater (1888; demolished in 1929), and several theaters and vaudeville houses in Brooklyn. J.B. McElfatrick died in 1906, but his son William continued to run the firm until his own death in 1922.<sup>51</sup> His last known commission was the Fordham Theater (demolished in 1987) in the Bronx.

### ***Israels & Harder***

The firm of Israels & Harder was formed by Charles H. Israels and Julius F. Harder in 1897. Israels, born in New York City on December 5, 1864, was educated at Irving Institute in Tarrytown, N.Y. Later, he continued his architecture education at the Art Students League and eventually in France.<sup>52</sup> He had established a New York City architectural practice by 1889. From 1893 until 1896, he joined Harder and Augustus L.C. Marsh to form the firm Marsh, Israels, & Harder. In 1897, the firm became Israels & Harder.<sup>53</sup>

Charles H. Israels was an influential and active member in the field of architecture. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects, secretary of the Municipal Art Society, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Architectural League of New York.<sup>54</sup> In 1907 he served as a member of the Building Code Revision Commission.<sup>55</sup> He also contributed articles and criticisms to the *Architectural Press*.<sup>56</sup> Israels died in 1911 at the age of forty-five from a heart attack brought on by pneumonia.<sup>57</sup>

Julius F. Harder was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1866. In 1885 he moved to New York and was a practicing architect until the 1920s. Although John Duncan is credited as the designer of Grant's Tomb, it is rumored that Harder had significant influence as he was in charge of Duncan's office during its conception. In 1891, Harder was also employed in the Construction Department of the Columbian

<sup>50</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 9.

<sup>51</sup> "Architect Dies at Work," June 7, 1906.

<sup>52</sup> "Obituaries- Charles Henry Israels," *The American Institute of Architects Quarterly Bulletin*, January, 1912, vol. 12, No. 4, 298.

<sup>53</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 10.

<sup>54</sup> "Obituary- Charles Henry Israels," *New York Times*, November 14, 1911, Newspapers.com

<sup>55</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 10.

<sup>56</sup> "Obituaries- Charles Henry Israels," 298.

<sup>57</sup> "Obituary- Charles Henry Israels," November 14, 1911.

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

Exposition in Chicago but returned to New York in 1893.<sup>58</sup> He is also known for designing the Brooklyn Memorial Arch at Grand Army Plaza adjacent to Prospect Park in Brooklyn, a project for which he was awarded the Architects League gold medal.<sup>59</sup> He was one of the founders and the first president of the United Civic Association in Queens and a member of the Bellecourt Civic Association of Bayside. Harder passed away in 1930 at the age of sixty-four from a heart attack.

The firm's work primarily included apartment buildings, hotels, commercial buildings, and rowhouses.<sup>60</sup> Their commissions included the Devon, Walton, Warrington, and Arlington hotels and the Turn Verein German-American Community Center (demolished 1984) on the Upper East Side.<sup>61</sup> They were also commissioned to design a courthouse on the north side of Chambers Street in 1904, but the building was never realized.<sup>62</sup> The Hudson Theatre is their only known theater commission.

The change in architects during the construction led to confusion as to which firm should be credited with the Hudson's design. McElfatrick & Son was a prominent firm specializing in theater design, while Israels & Harder focused on other types of construction and had no other theater commissions in their portfolio. Some early press attributed the design of the completed theater to McElfatrick; however, the theater's plans and realized design suggest otherwise.<sup>63</sup>

In 1987, the original plans signed by Israels & Harder were uncovered. It has been determined that McElfatrick & Son completed the exterior north and south elevations of the theater and that Israels & Harder designed the theater's interior.<sup>64</sup> Supporting this assumption is the fact that the theater's interior design does not resemble other theaters completed by McElfatrick & Son. Their approach to design, for both their nineteenth- and twentieth-century theaters, was rooted in conceptual notions of nineteenth-century theater design. Long after the cantilevered balcony construction that ensured uninterrupted sightlines from the orchestra and lower balconies became a popular configuration for theater auditoriums, McElfatrick & Son still used balcony structural systems that featured support columns and blocked views. The Hudson's cantilevered balconies suggest that Israels & Harder completed the interior design with this innovative structural system.

### ***Louis Comfort Tiffany***

One of the most well-known American artists, Louis Comfort Tiffany worked in the decorative arts for over half a century, from the 1870s to the mid-1920s. Born in New York City on February 18, 1848, Tiffany was exposed to the finest craftsmen and designers early in his life through the work of his father

---

<sup>58</sup> "Rites for Harder, Designer, are Held at Bayside Home," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 22, 1930, Newspapers.com (Accessed March 2, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> "List of Plans Filed for New Structures and Alterations," *New York Times*, May 16, 1903, Newspapers.com

<sup>61</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 10.

<sup>62</sup> "Site for New Courthouse," *New-York Tribune*, January 10, 1904, Newspapers.com.

<sup>63</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 10.

<sup>64</sup> Morrison, *Broadway Theaters*, 39.



Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

Charles Lewis Tiffany.<sup>65</sup> In 1837, Charles Lewis Tiffany was one of the founders of Tiffany, Young and Ellis, which in 1853 became the well-known Tiffany & Company when Tiffany became the sole owner.<sup>66</sup> At this time Tiffany shifted the firm's primary interest to jewelry.

Tiffany began his artistic explorations as a painter working in oils and water colors. However, he is best known for decorative glass works, done in a medium known as "Tiffany Favre glass."<sup>67</sup> In 1902, after the death of his father, he became the first director of design for Tiffany & Co. That same year he also incorporated his design firm, Tiffany Studios. Tiffany's productions, influenced by the late-nineteenth-century Aesthetic Movement, the philosophies of British designer William Morris (1834-1896), and international decorative arts, were designed with the intent of creating a total work of art, in which each piece of the design was important to the final product.<sup>68</sup> His vast array of work included both religious and secular stained-glass windows, furniture, interiors, mosaics, vases, jewelry, and lamps. He worked in several mediums, including his most well-known favre glass, but also in ceramics, metal, and wood.

Tiffany worked on many theater interiors, including the Hudson. The first was the original Lyceum Theatre (demolished 1902), which opened in 1885 between Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Street on Fourth Avenue in Manhattan.<sup>69</sup> A watercolor rendering is all that survives of Tiffany's work on the Lyceum, which depicts silver stenciled-and-painted designs on the ceiling and a large hanging light fixture in the center of the auditorium. Another example of one of his theater designs is the Buffalo Theatre (now known as Shea's Performing Arts Center) in Buffalo, New York, which opened in 1926. Drawings from the original design remain indicating that Tiffany and his firm were responsible for the general color scheme, the floral leaded-glass windows on the aisles, and the chandeliers.<sup>70</sup> At the Hudson Theatre, which opened eighteen years after the Lyceum, his evolution as an artist can be seen in the favre glass found in both the three domed light fixtures in the inner lobby and the mosaics that adorn the theater's auditorium. As at the Buffalo Theatre, Tiffany Studios most likely contributed to the vibrant color palette of the Hudson that is reflected throughout the theater's interior spaces.

In 1919 he established the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation for art students at Oyster Bay with a gift of \$1,000,000 to maintain the institution.<sup>71</sup> Upon his death in 1933, Tiffany deeded the foundation his entire collection of paintings, glass, and other art objects, and his home, Laurelton Hall. He stated that the purpose of the institution is for "art education, directed both to art appreciation and production within the scope of the industrial as well as the fine arts" and "the establishment and maintenance of a museum to contain objects of art."<sup>72</sup> As an artist, he embodied the artistic spirit of the Gilded Age. Even nearly a century after his work was at its peak his art continues to be recognized internationally, and his legacy continues to endure at places like the Hudson Theatre.

---

<sup>65</sup> Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, *Louis Comfort Tiffany at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Adapted from *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, v. 56, no. 1 (Summer, 1998), (*New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art*), 1999, 4.

<sup>66</sup> "Private Funeral Services Planned For L.C. Tiffany," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 18, 1933, Newspapers.com

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Frelinghuysen, *Louis Comfort Tiffany at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>71</sup> "Private Funeral Services Planned For L.C. Tiffany," January 18, 1933.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

### ***The Hudson Theatre: The Architecture***

The Hudson Theatre was built as part of an explosion of early twentieth century theater construction in the newly developed Broadway Theater District. Four other theaters were completed the same year: the Lyceum, the Lyric (partially demolished in 1996), the New Amsterdam, and the Liberty. Today, although some have been greatly altered, the Hudson survives today with the Lyceum, the New Amsterdam, the Liberty, and the New Victory (historically, the Victory constructed in 1900), as part of this nucleus of turn-of-the-century playhouses in the Broadway Theater District.

Henry B. Harris partnered with local banker and investor George G. Heye because he wanted the Hudson “to be the permanent New York home of his stars,” his productions, and his offices. The Hudson served as Harris’s headquarters for the remaining years of his relatively short career. The site included two separate parcels of land: one fronting West Forty-Fourth Street and the other fronting West Forty-Fifth Street. Heye purchased the Forty-Fifth Street parcel from Paul J. Crovat and the Forty-Fourth Street parcel from the estate of Joseph Deutsch at a combined price of \$250,000.<sup>73</sup>

Construction began on the theater on April 2, 1902 by the R. H. MacDonald Construction Company with initial intentions to erect a ten-story office building that was never realized.<sup>74</sup> Officially named on March 30, 1903, the Hudson Theatre’s exterior was treated in a more restrained but well executed Beaux-Arts Classical aesthetic compared to the plush and lavish interior.<sup>75</sup> The entire building received ample praise from theater critics, but the majority of the admiration was in response to the building’s interior.

Critics were most enthusiastic about the unusually large foyers, the triple-domed Louis Comfort Tiffany light fixtures, and the new system of diffused lighting. The ticket lobby, accessed by the four sets of large, double-leaf doors, was historically lit by the electric, sixteen-candle-power light bulbs that were featured with each of the 264 coffered. The overall character of the bright space was meant to contrast with the concealed illumination of the auditorium. The ticket lobby was finished in “Graeco Roman verd-antique marble,” with classical lines and ornament.<sup>76</sup> The combined ticket lobby and inner lobby, which served as the first portions in the procession to the auditorium, measured a combined total of one hundred feet long by thirty feet wide, larger than any other theater in New York City. The even more elaborate inner lobby, with its Tiffany light fixtures and expanses of mirrored glass, was compared, albeit a bit exaggeratedly, to the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.<sup>77</sup> The pilasters and trim in the inner lobby were painted in different combinations of ivory, green, and orange. This color scheme was carried throughout the rest of the theater, including the curtains and draperies, carpeting, and mosaic tiles that adorned the portions of the proscenium arch, balconies, and orchestra boxes.

The auditorium continued the lavish ornament with French tapestries, verd-antique marble, large classical columns that supported the balconies, and rich green velvet curtains. The ladies’ lounge featured full-length mirrors and Louis XVI boudoirs, “in which the feminine theatergoers may gaze at

<sup>73</sup> “Another New Theater,” January 17, 1902.

<sup>74</sup> “Work Begun on a New Theater,” April 3, 1902.

<sup>75</sup> “Wine Spilled on New Theater,” *New York Times*, March 31, 1903, Newspapers.com

<sup>76</sup> “Miss Ethel Barrymore in ‘Cousin Kate’,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1903, Newspapers.com

<sup>77</sup> “The New Hudson Theatre,” *The New York Times*, October 18, 1903, Newspapers.com

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

themselves from head to foot between every act, if they so wish.”<sup>78</sup> When the Hudson opened on October 19, 1903, a critic commented that “no richer and more tasteful theater is to be found short of the splendid Hofburg Theater in Vienna.”<sup>79</sup>

The form of the auditorium represented changes to theater design that were occurring at the time of the Hudson’s construction. Unlike many of its earlier counterparts, the Hudson featured only four orchestra boxes flanking the stage. The balconies were not supported by posts or columns, but were cantilevered over the orchestra floor. The shape of the auditorium was elliptical, creating wide vantage points from all sides of the space. The proscenium arch was designed to be shorter and wider than nineteenth-century designs, creating a wide expanse for the performance to be viewed. These design features combined to provide patrons, no matter what seat they occupied, with unobstructed sight lines of the entire stage.

The theater also featured several technical innovations that became available at the turn of the century. In the lobbies and auditorium of the Hudson, the spaces were lit by a system of diffused lighting consisting of hundreds of concealed, electric light bulbs. This method of lighting buildings was designed by Luther B. Steiringer, who devised and oversaw the illumination of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.<sup>80</sup> The brightness of the lighting system could also be manipulated. This adapted method of diffused lighting was composed of “dozens and dozens of so-called ‘dimmers’,” to control the lighting changes and to make the transitions “so gradual that there will be no unpleasant impression of flashes when they are least desired.” The only other venue that had such a system, although at a much larger scale, was the Metropolitan Opera House (demolished in 1967).<sup>81</sup> The theater also included a ventilation system that circulated air into the auditorium after it was warmed or cooled by “‘mushrooms’ under the floor.”<sup>82</sup> Safety was also a significant component that guided the design of the theater. The interior of the theater featured twenty-eight exits that directly accessed the streets or adjacent alleys. All of the materials were “fireproof” and the entire building was covered with a sprinkler system. Many of these innovations, such as the light, sprinkler, and ventilation systems, were the foundations of late-twentieth century counterparts that are recognized and used in public and private buildings today.

### ***The Hudson Theatre: The Playhouse***

The Hudson Theatre opened on October 19, 1903 with Ethel Barrymore starring in Hubert Henry Davies’ comedy *Cousin Kate*.<sup>83</sup> The theater was devoted to the production of drawing-room comedies, like *Cousin Kate*, which had recently gained success in London. Barrymore returned to the Hudson in 1904 starring in Thomas Race Ward’s *Sunday*. In this play she spoke her most famous lines, “that’s all there is, there isn’t anymore.”<sup>84</sup> During the 1905-1906 season, Bernard Shaw’s *Man and Superman* was

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> “Miss Ethel Barrymore in ‘Cousin Kate,’” October 20, 1903.

<sup>80</sup> “The New Hudson Theatre,” October 18, 1903.

<sup>81</sup> “Changes in Opera House,” November 21, 1903.

<sup>82</sup> “The New Hudson Theatre,” October 18, 1903.

<sup>83</sup> “Classified Ad—No Title,” *New York Times*, October 19, 1903, Newspapers.com

<sup>84</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, “Hudson Theatre,” 14.

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

performed, featuring Richard Bennett in the leading role. This production marked the first time Shaw allowed one of his plays to be performed in a version that differed from the way that he had originally written it. And again in 1908, Barrymore returned to star in W. Somerset Maugham's *Lady Frederick*.<sup>85</sup> In April of that year, Henry B. Harris purchased the Hudson from George G. Heye for a sum of \$700,000.<sup>86</sup>

Following Henry B. Harris's death in 1912, Irene Harris continued to produce plays at the Hudson under his name; early on, she produced Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* under the name of the Estate of Henry B. Harris. From the 1910s until the beginning of the 1920s, the Hudson Theatre featured several successful plays, some playing hundreds of performances. Such plays include Samuel Shipman and Aaron Hoffman's *Friendly Enemies*, which ran for 440 performances in 1918, Booth Tarkington's *Clarence*, with a young Helen Hayes, which ran for 300, and Arthur Goodrich's *So This is London*, which ran for 357 performances.<sup>87</sup>

An article in 1928 commented on both the success and loyalty of the Hudson's long-running productions and the employees. At the time of the production of Brock Pemberton's *Going Home*, written by Ransom Rideout, eight of the original playhouse employees still were working at the Hudson Theatre.<sup>88</sup> The employees included Howard Schnebbe, who was currently leasing the theater from Irene Harris, his brother Allan Schnebbe, the house treasurer, Thomas Johnson, advertising agent and doorman who took the first ticket on opening night in 1903, along with five other long time employees.<sup>89</sup>

Unfortunately, the Great Depression brought about a huge decline in the entertainment industry and hundreds of theaters across the county were forced to close. In the early part of the 1930s, general manager Howard Schnebbe and Henry B. Harris's brother, William Harris Jr., remained extremely active at the Hudson, but their efforts were not enough to save the theater from insolvency.<sup>90</sup> Irene Harris ultimately lost the Hudson to foreclosure.

In 1934, the Hudson Theatre was leased from its new owners by the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) for use as the CBS Radio Playhouse.<sup>91</sup> The first floor boxes were removed to accommodate the announcer's booth and a commercial booth. CBS occupied the Hudson until 1937. In 1937, the Hudson returned to stage productions under the management of Shubert Brothers.<sup>92</sup> During its second phase as a playhouse, the longest running play was produced at the Hudson. From 1943 to 1944, Joseph Kesselring's international hit *Arsenic and Old Lace* ran a total of 1,444 performances before leaving the

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. For a complete production list please see Appendix. This production history is from the designation report filed by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission on 1987 based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Commissions public hearing for the Hudson Theatre.

<sup>86</sup> "Harris Buys the Hudson," April 02, 1908.

<sup>87</sup> New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Hudson Theatre," 26-29.

<sup>88</sup> "Hudson Theatre is now Aged Twenty-six," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 9, 1928, Newspapers.com

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> "Hudson Theatre is a Beehive Again," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 29, 1933, Newspapers.com

<sup>91</sup> Morrison, *Broadway Theaters*, 39.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

Hudson. The show, which first opened at Harris's Fulton Theater, featured Josephine Hull, Effie Shannon, Bruce Gordon, Jean Adair, Allyn Joslyn, Boris Karloff, and Edgar Stehli.<sup>93</sup>

In 1950, the theater was purchased by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and converted into a television studio.<sup>94</sup> Both the well-known Jack Paar and Steve Allen shows were televised there. Steve Allen's "Man on the Street" interviews took place on West Forty-Fifth Street, directly outside of the Hudson's stage door. The theater was used for television productions until 1959.

From 1959 until 1965, the building once again housed stage productions but struggled to survive towards the middle of the 1960s. Lillian Hellman's *Toys in the Attic* was produced featuring Jason Robards, Maureen Stapleton, and Irene Worth. Irene Worth won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for her performance. Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* with Geraldine Page, Ben Gazzara, and Jane Fonda was the last production at the Hudson before the theater went on an almost two year hiatus. It reopened in 1965 with Ann Corio's *This Was Burlesque*, which was performed at the theater 125 times before going on a national tour.

Since 1965, the Hudson Theatre has had several different owners and has operated as a burlesque house, a playhouse, and concert hall that featured live performers, including James Taylor, Peter Allen, and Miles Davis. In 1987, the exterior and portions of the interior, including the ticket lobby, inner lobby, auditorium, balconies, and orchestra boxes, were designated a New York City Landmark. In 1989, the theater became a special events space for the newly constructed Macklowe Hotel and Conference Center. The Hudson Theatre is now owned and operated as a special events space, as part of the Millennium Broadway Hotel.

### **Conclusion**

The Hudson Theatre at 139-141 West Forty-Fourth Street is reflective of the development of the Broadway Theater District from the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. The theater represents the empire of Henry B. Harris and his legacy of stage productions, which continued even after his death. Through the management of his wife, Irene Harris, the Hudson became one of the most successful Broadway playhouses in the 1920s, and even later presented some of Broadway's most memorable theatrical successes. The Hudson's architecture reflects changes both architecturally and technically that forever changed entertainment industry. Although the use of the theater has changed over the years, alternating between a legitimate playhouse and other types of entertainment venues, for over a hundred years the building has been an anchor to the area's early past despite an ever-changing built environment. As such, it continues to significantly define the Broadway Theater District and its place in American theater history.

---

<sup>93</sup> "After 144 Weeks 'Arsenic' Moves to New Cemetery," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 26, 1943, Newspapers.com

<sup>94</sup> Morrison, *Broadway Theaters*, 39.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

"After 144 Weeks 'Arsenic' Moves to New Cemetery." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 26, 1943. Newspapers.com

"Amusements—Manhattan." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 8, 1933. Newspapers.com

"Architect Dies at Work." *New-York Tribune*, June 7, 1906. Newspapers.com

"Another New Theater." *New-York Tribune*, January 17, 1902. Newspapers.com

Blackwood, Byrne David. "The Theater of J.B. McElpatrick and Sons, Architects, 1855-1922." PhD diss.: University of Kansas, 1966.

"Burlesque Reopening At Union City House." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 24, 1950. Newspapers.com

"Changes in Opera House." *New York Times*, November 21, 1903. Newspapers.com

"Classified Ad—No Title." *New York Times*, October 19, 1903. Newspapers.com

Collections Portal. *Museum of the City of New York*. New York: New York. 2014.

"Concerning H.B. Harris." *New York Times*. April 21, 1912. Newspapers.com

"Craze for Theater Building Now Rages throughout the Land: 300 Playhouses under Construction, an Increase of 10 Per Cent." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 15, 1903. Newspapers.com

"Fire Drill in Theaters." *New York Times*, January 2, 1904. Newspapers.com

Fishkind, Silas B. "A Woman Unafraid." *New-York Tribune*,. January 25, 1920. Newspapers.com

Frelinghuysen, Alice Cooney. *Louis Comfort Tiffany at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Adapted from *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, v. 56, no. 1 (Summer, 1998). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1999.

"Gossip of the Theaters." *New York Times*, August 2, 1902. Newspapers.com

"Harris Buys the Hudson." *The New York Times*. April 2, 1908. Newspapers.com

"Hudson Theatre and the Quality Shop." *Detroit Publishing Co.* Library of Congress. Prints and Photographs Division. Washington. 1913. LC-D4-68347.

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

"Hudson Theatre is a Beehive Again." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 29, 1933. Newspapers.com

"Hudson Theatre is now Aged Twenty-six." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 9, 1928.  
Newspapers.com

"Hudson Theatre: Israels & Harder, Architects." *Architects' and Builders' Magazine* 5 (October 1902-September 1903): 199-208.

"In Manhattan." *Brooklyn Life (Brooklyn, New York)*. October 24, 1903, 24. Newspapers.com

"List of Plans Filed for New Structures and Alterations." *New York Times*, May 16, 1903.  
Newspapers.com

Mason, John Alden. *George G. Heye, 1874-1957*. New York: Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation, 1958.

"Miss Ethel Barrymore in 'Cousin Kate'." *New York Times*, October 20, 1903. Newspapers.com

Morehouse, Ward, III. *Discovering the Hudson*. Albany: BearManor Media, 2007.

Morrison, Craig T. *Theaters*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.

Morrison, William. *Broadway Theaters: History and Architecture*. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999.

"Mrs. H.B. Harris to Wed; Reveals Wrecked Romance." *The Evening World (New York, New York)*, September 12, 1922. Newspapers.com

"The New Hudson Theatre." *New York Times*, October 18, 1903. Newspapers.com

New York City Department of Buildings. Permit No. 150. Dated March 25, 1902.

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. "Hudson Theatre." New York, New York. LP-1340. November 17, 1987.

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. "Hudson Theatre: Interior." New York, New York. LP-1341. November 17, 1987.

"Noted Men on the Lost Titanic." *New York Times*, April 16, 1912. Newspapers.com

"Obituaries- Charles Henry Israels." *The American Institute of Architects Quarterly Bulletin*. 12.4 (January, 1912) : 298.

"Obituary- Charles Henry Israels." *New York Times*, November 14, 1911. Newspapers.com

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

"Obituary- Henry B. Harris." *New York Times*. April 16, 1912. Newspapers.com

"Private Funeral Services Planned For L.C. Tiffany." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 18, 1933.  
Newspapers.com

"Rites for Harder, Designer, are Held at Bayside Home." *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 22, 1930.  
Newspapers.com

"Site for New Courthouse." *New-York Tribune*, January 10, 1904. Newspapers.com

"Wine Spilled on New Theater." *New York Times*, March 31, 1903. Newspapers.com

"Work Begun on a New Theater." *New-York Tribune*, April 3, 1902. Newspapers.com

---

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
PDIL Approved 8/28/15; NPS Project Number 32840
- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_



Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

---

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property** 0.175 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |              |                    |                      |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Zone: 18T | Easting: 585722.36 | Northing: 4512295.09 |
| 2. Zone:     | Easting:           | Northing:            |
| 3. Zone:     | Easting:           | Northing:            |
| 4. Zone:     | Easting :          | Northing:            |

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for the Hudson Theatre is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

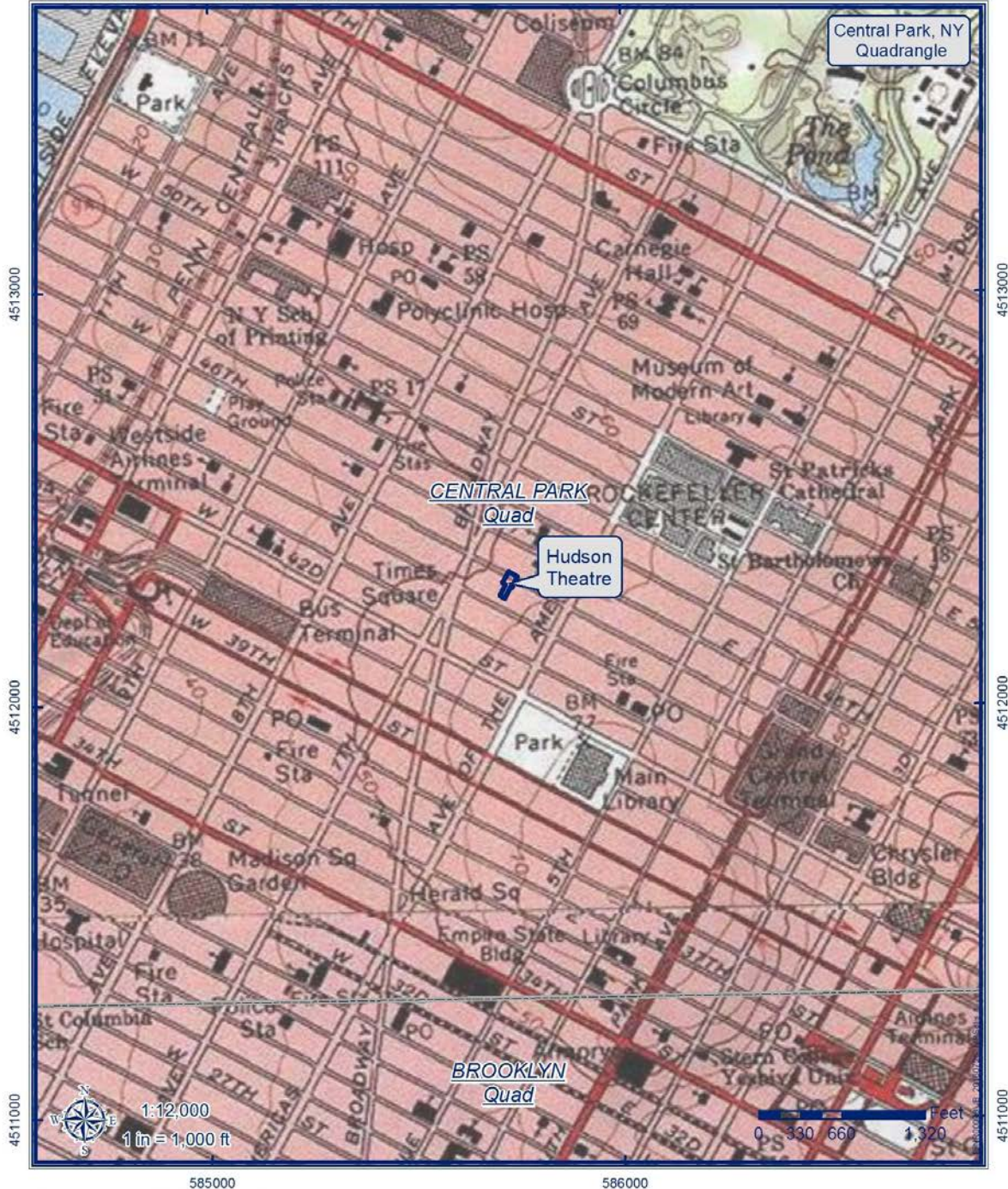
The boundary is consistent with the property lines on which the Hudson Theatre was constructed between 1902 and 1903. The property is located mid-block and can be accessed from the south by West Forty-Forth Street and from the north by West Forth-Fifth Street. Although the property was combined with the adjacent Lot 15 after the period of significance, the original lot still retains its historic configuration and acreage dating to the theater's construction between 1902 and 1903.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

Hudson Theatre  
New York, New York Co., NY

139-141 West 44th Street  
New York, NY 10036



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

Hudson Theatre  
New York, New York Co., NY

139-141 West 44th Street  
New York, NY 10036



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

---

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Emily Eig, Kim Daileader, and Erin Howe, Historic Preservation Specialists  
organization: EHT Traceries  
street & number: 1121 Fifth Street, N.W.  
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001  
e-mail: kim.daileader@traceries.com or erin.howe@traceries.com  
telephone: (202) 393-1199  
date: April 2016

---

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items)

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log

Name of Property:	Hudson Theatre
City or Vicinity:	New York, NY
Photographer:	Kim Daileader & Erin Howe, EHT Tracerics, Inc.
Date Photographed:	February 5, 2015
Location of Original Digital Files:	New York State Division of Historic Preservation
Number of Photographs:	24

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0001  
Façade along West 44<sup>th</sup> Street, looking NE.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0002  
Façade along West 44<sup>th</sup> Street, looking NW.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0003  
Detail of façade, looking NE.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0004  
Detail of second-story balcony window, looking NE.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0005  
North elevation along West 45<sup>th</sup> Street, looking SE.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0006  
Entry vestibule, facing Millennium Hotel lobby, looking NW.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0007  
Ticket lobby from south side, facing inner lobby, looking N.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0008  
East wall of ticket lobby and ticket booth.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0009  
Detail of ticket window in ticket lobby.

Hudson Theatre

Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0010

Inner lobby, facing ticket lobby, looking S.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0011

Detail of Tiffany light fixtures in inner lobby.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0012

Inner lobby facing auditorium, looking NE.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0013

Orchestra promenade between orchestra and inner lobby, looking NW.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0014

Orchestra under balcony, looking NW.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0015

Orchestra box detail.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0016

View of auditorium from state, looking SW

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0017

View of stage and proscenium arch from upper balcony, looking NE.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0018

View of stair backstage to upper stage support levels.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0019

Catwalks and pulleys backstage, upper levels.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0020

Basement level, showing concrete block walls.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0021

Basement level hotel support offices.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0022

Second floor offices, corridor.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0023

Third floor apartment, corridor.

NY\_New York County\_Hudson Theatre\_0024

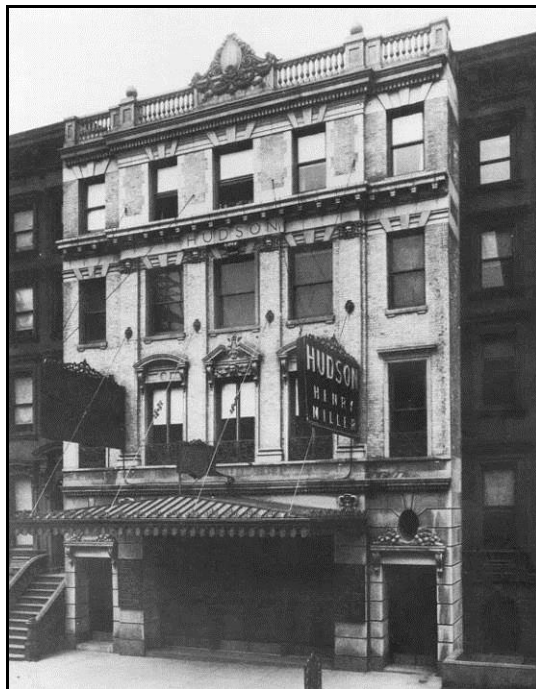
Fourth apartment, windows on façade, looking S.

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State



Hudson Theatre and West 44<sup>th</sup> Street, 1903. (*Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, 1903)



Hudson Theatre, 1904. (*New York City Historical Society*, 1904)

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State



Hudson Theatre, c.1913. (*Library of Congress*, c. 1913)



Ticket Lobby in 1903. (*Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, 1903)



Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State



Orchestra Promenade and Orchestra in 1903; note the half walls that have since been removed from the promenade. (*Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, 1903)



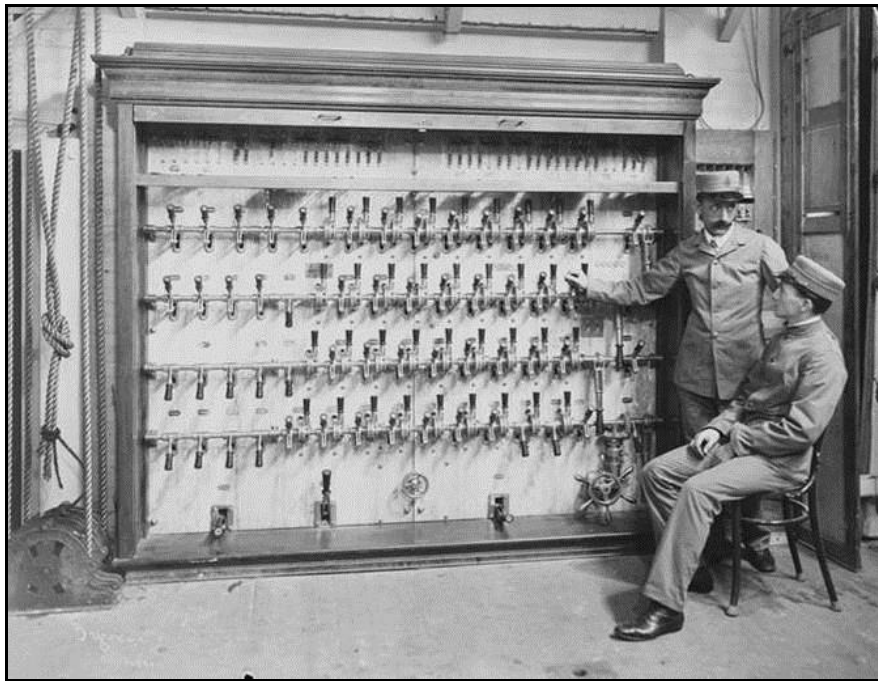
Orchestra, Boxes, and portion of Balcony in 1903, prior to being removed. (*Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, 1903)

Hudson Theatre  
Name of Property

New York, NY  
County and State



View of Auditorium from Stage as it appeared in 1903. (*Architects' and Builders' Magazine*, 1903)



Light System Backstage, 1903. (*Museum of the City of New York*, 1903)



HUDSON

HUDSON THEATRE

NO PARKING  
Anytime

HUDSON THEATRE

HUDSON THEATRE



THERMO KING

133

V

VALET



HUDSON



HUDSON THEATRE





































EXIT





EXIT

BUSINESS SOURCE







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Hudson Theatre  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, New York

DATE RECEIVED: 9/30/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/28/16  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/14/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/15/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000780

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 11/15/16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

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

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

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

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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Landmarks Preservation  
Commission**

Meenakshi Srinivasan  
Chair

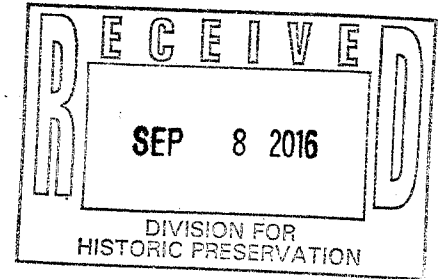
Sarah Carroll  
Executive Director  
SCarroll@lpc.nyc.gov

1 Centre Street  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

212 669 7902 tel  
212 669 7797 fax

August 31, 2016

Ruth Pierpont, Deputy Commissioner  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 189  
Peebles Island  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189



Re: Hudson Theater, Manhattan

Dear Deputy Commissioner Pierpont:

I write on behalf of Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the Hudson Theater, located at 139-141 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street, in Manhattan, for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Commission strongly supports the nomination of the Hudson Theater. On November 17, 1987, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate this Theater as an individual and interior New York City landmark. The Hudson Theater survives today as one of the historic playhouses that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built in 1902-04, the Hudson was part of a boom in theater construction that shaped the character of Times Square as the new heart of New York's Theater District.

Therefore, based on the Commission's prior review and designation of this building, the Commission has determined that the Hudson Theater appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Carroll

cc: Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair  
Mary Beth Betts, Director of Research



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner



26 September 2016

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following three nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Hudson Theatre, New York County  
Poughkeepsie and Connecticut Stanfordville Station, Dutchess County  
Maplewood Historic District Boundary Increase, Monroe County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office