

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC **Bell Telephone Laboratories**

AND/OR COMMON
Westbeth

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER **463 West Street**

CITY, TOWN **New York** VICINITY OF **Twentieth** CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
STATE **New York** CODE **36** COUNTY **New York** CODE **061**

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME **Westbeth Incorporated**

STREET & NUMBER **463 West Street**

CITY, TOWN **New York** VICINITY OF STATE **New York**

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, **New York County Clerk's Office**
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET & NUMBER **31 Chambers Street**

CITY, TOWN **New York** STATE **New York**

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE **None**

DATE FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

74

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

463 West Street was constructed in 1896-1898 on part of a block bounded by West, Bethune, Washington, and Bank Streets on the western fringe of Greenwich Village in New York City. The structure was built to house the laboratory facilities of the Western Electric Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the American Telephone and Telephone Company. 463 West Street is a conglomerate of plain, sturdy, 13 story, solid concrete and steel commercial structures faced in buff brick and trimmed in terra-cotta. Constructed according to the best standard factory designs of the period, the building is of no major architectural significance.

From 1898 to 1966 463 West Street was the home of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, the name of a company jointly owned since 1925 by American Telephone and Telegraph Company and Western Electric. By the 1966 the building no longer met the laboratory needs of the Bell System. Bell Telephone Laboratories gave up the building and moved to New Jersey.

In 1967 the building was purchased by Westbeth Incorporated, a non-profit organization established to convert the empty laboratories and offices into "living unit-studios" that would provide low cost housing for New York artists endangered of being driven out of the city by spiralling loft rental costs. Between 1967 and 1969 Richard Meir, according to Ada Louise Huxtable, "...one of the city's more conspicuously talented and stylish younger architects," transformed the building into 383 studio type living and working units. The conversion, which was realized at the low cost of \$12,000 per unit, received considerable critical acclaim. Mayor John Lindsay officially opened Westbeth in May 1970. Local and national media praised the venture as an example of recycling an older building while at the same time providing artists with low cost housing and studio facilities.

The integrity of the exterior of 463 West Street is whole. It is unchanged from its appearance during the years the building housed the Bell Telephone Laboratories. The interior has been completely transformed into living units, a dance studio, and various commercial facilities.

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8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In his 1908 annual report to the stockholders of the American Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (AT&T), Theodore N. Vail, often called the father of the giant company, outlined the organization's basic objectives. Our goal, he said, is "one policy, one system, universal service." This slogan, which guides the world's largest monopoly to the present day, served as the basis for the establishment and development of one of the United States' oldest, most successful, and most prestigious industrial research institutions, the Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Bell Telephone Laboratories is one of four major components of the Bell System, the others being AT&T with its operating companies, Western Electric, and the Long Lines Department. As presently constituted Bell Telephone Laboratories was established in 1925 as a separate corporation jointly owned by AT&T and Western Electric. AT&T funded basic research while Western Electric supported engineering research. Although known as Bell Telephone Laboratories only since 1925, the lab traces its history to a small shop in Boston established by a Mr. Williams in 1875. In 1898 Western Electric, which had previously established two labs of its own, moved into a new facility at 463 West Street in New York City. In 1907 the Boston facility joined the Western Electric labs on West Street thus bringing together the research and development activities of Vail's "one system" under a single roof. From a beginning in 1907 with a few hundred employees on West Street, Bell Telephone Laboratories has grown until today it operates 20 laboratories in ten states, employes approximately 17,000 people, and has an annual budget (1973) of \$536,000,000. It is the worlds largest private research laboratory.

In 1939 an admiring author wrote a history of AT&T which he subtitled, "The Story of a Great Monopoly." Discussing the Bell Telephone Laboratories, he stated that since the beginning it activities included "...all the engineering arts which pertain to electrical communications equipment, and all the science basic to those arts." The laboratories had a two fold objective; first, "...to advance the art of wire telephony," and second, "...to obtain a degree of knowledge, influence, and control in adjacent industries sufficient to protect the capital investment against possible competition by other means of communication." Since its inception the lab has pursued both science and engineering, i.e. part of its energies are devoted to pure or fundamental research and part to applying the findings of pure science to communication technology. The laboratory thus advances the interests of pure science while at the same time enhancing "Ma Bell's" technological position in the field of telecommunications and solving her operating problems of a technical, hardware nature.

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(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Horace Coon, American Telephone and Telegraph, (New York, 1939).
 Edward B. Craft, "The Bell System Research Laboratories," Electrical Communication
 Vol. 2 (January, 1924).
 George H. Daniels, Science in American Society. (New York, 1971).

(Continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 583620 4509780
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE James Sheire, Historian

3/5/75

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Statement of Significance:

Westbeth

The accomplishments of the Bell Telephone Laboratories have been truly remarkable. Technological breakthroughs, many of which were the results of pure science research, have included: high fidelity recording (1925); sound motion pictures (1926); television transmission (1927); color TV transmission (1929); coaxial cable carrier system (1929); radio astronomy (1933); digital computer (1938); transistor (1947); microwave radio relay system (1948); direct distance dialing (1951); silicon solar cell (1954); transoceanic telephone cable (1956); lasers (1958); large superconducting magnets (1961); satellite communications (1962); and picturephone (1964).

The significance of the Bell Telephone Laboratories in the history of science in the United States is that the company is pioneer role in industrial research. The lab was one of the first to demonstrate the intimate relationship between science and technology and industrial development.

The end of the 19th century witnessed the emergence of the basic institutions which have guided the American pursuit of science. The institutions, or estates of science, are the government, the universities, the foundations, and the industrial research laboratories. Industrial research laboratories developed first in those industries that owed their very existence to the scientific discoveries of the second half of the 19th century. Prominate among them were the chemical, pharmaceutical, and petroleum industries as well as a wide variety of industries established to exploit the wonders of electricity. The telephone, Alexander Graham Bell's invention upon which the Bell System was built, was a child of electricity. Company officials early recognized that they must turn to science and technology to, in the terms of the period, improve the art of telephony. In establishing its own research laboratories, some company executives and almost all who directed and staffed the lab thought of themselves as disciples of the progress science and technology brings to all mankind. But the company also had a more direct interest in conducting its own research. By making its own discoveries, and not leaving them to the universities, let alone to other companies, AT&T would secure patent rights to new technologies which would enhance the company's market position and contribute to its growth. (The court battles over patent rights and infringements were especially brutal in the electrical industries.) The American system of free enterprise capitalism was thus joined to the pursuit of scientific knowledge as an integral part of industrial activity. Knowledge and the ability to "produce" it in the industrial research laboratory became a part of a company's capital assets. "Ma Bell's" growth into every area of the communication industry is testimony to the corporate advantages and wealth the company has reaped from its dedicated investment in research and development.

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Statement of Significance:

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The significance of the discoveries of the Bell Telephone Laboratories to American civilization and culture is apparent from the list of accomplishments noted above. From the telephone to satellites, from motions pictures to television, the discoveries of the Bell Labs dominate the telecommunication industries and have had a fundamental impact on countless other industries. The nature of their impact on American culture and civilization, their human effect, significance, and meaning, has become an integral part of social and cultural study and criticism of this century. Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, artists, literary critics, and culture critics of every taste and prejudice have continuously examined and reexamined, interpreted and reinterpreted, the human meaning of the revolution in telecommunications which the Bell Telephone Laboratories has led since its beginning in 1907. Some claim the quality of our civilization as well as our standard of material well being have been infinitely raised. Others deride the whole venture as an exercise in dehumanization, alienation, or vulgarization. But all agree that the revolution in telecommunications has significantly affected American economic, social, political, and cultural reality. In its research and development activities the Bell Telephone Laboratories have been in the technological forefront of this transformation.

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Westbeth

Research--A National Resource, "Industrial Research," (Washington, 1941).

Don Woodford, "Parnassus on the Hudson," Bell Telephone Magazine, July/August 1970.

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