

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

For NPS use only

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

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic New York Yacht Club

and or common

**2. Location**

street & number 37 W. 44th Street not for publication

city, town New York City vicinity of

state New York code 036 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 type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Clubhouse</u>

Yacht Club

**4. Owner of Property**

name New York Yacht Club

street & number 37 W. 44th Street

city, town New York City vicinity of state New York 10036

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New York County Register's Office

street & number 31 Chambers Street

city, town New York City state New York 10007

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Landmark Designation Report  
(LP-1019)

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date September 11, 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 20 Vesey Street

city, town New York City state New York 10007

# 7. Description

Condition  
 excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

Check one  
 unaltered  
 altered

Check one  
 original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### Summary

The New York Yacht Club building houses a private men's club in midtown Manhattan just west of 5th Avenue. This is a largely commercial area although there are also a number of other private club buildings. The Club, flanked by commercial structures, is a mid-block building and occupies its entire lot. The side elevations are non-exposed party walls and the rear elevation is not visible. The Yacht Club is 7 stories in height (2 are included within the mansard roof, which is set back 15') and is constructed of brick with a finely grained stone facing. Stylistically, it is a Neo-Baroque version of Beaux-Arts architecture.

### Principal Architectural Features: Exterior<sup>1</sup>

The building is divided into four horizontal sections, three window bays and an entrance bay. The entrance pavilion at the east projects, providing a vertical counterbalance to the overall horizontal layering of the elevation.

A first story with grille-covered windows is designed as a podium for the grand, double-height piano nobile which is composed of three bays. Each bay contains a monumental round-arched window from the bottom of which projects an elaborately enframed bay window. The bay windows imitate the sterns of Baroque sailing vessels, especially Dutch Jaghts, and are fancifully carved with garlands of shells and seaweed, sculpted waves, and dolphins. This unusual system of fenestration is enframed by two monumental Ionic engaged columns at the center and Doric piers at the outer corners.

The entrance pavilion at this level contains a segmentally arched window from which projects an elaborately carved cartouche above the doorway in a composition analogous to that of the adjacent round-arched and bay windows. A deeply recessed rectangular window surmounts the segmentally arched one, and both are enframed by smooth broad pilasters adorned with the club shield.

Above the piano nobile level, a modillioned entablature runs the full width of the building. Upon this entablature rests a series of recessed rectangular windows separated by piers which become free-standing above the balustrade surmounting this third section of the facade. The piers originally supported a pergola which sheltered a roof garden. The mansard roof, set behind the plane of the facade, contains 2 stories with attic windows.

### Principal Architectural Features: Interior

The principal rooms of the club, arranged on split levels, are richly detailed and finely crafted. They include the Entrance Hall; the vast Model Room; the Rotunda, or Trophy Room, originally used as a cafe, and now used to display trophies (including the America's Cup until 1983); and the Grill Room, which resembles the hold of a ship.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	X architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		X other (specify)
				Recreation
<b>Specific dates</b>	1899-1900	<b>Builder Architect</b>	Whitney Warren of Warren & Wetmore	(yachting)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Summary

The New York Yacht Club, renowned as the long-time home of America's Cup, is America's oldest and foremost yachting organization. Before moving to W. 44th Street, the club had been located in much more modest accommodations. It was at the instigation of millionaire banker J.P. Morgan, then Commodore of the club, that the new building was erected. The clubhouse has changed very little over the years and is today highly evocative of the Gilded Age in America which produced the magnificent private men's clubs of New York.<sup>1</sup>

Constructed in 1899-1900, the New York Yacht Club is a brilliant example of the Neo-Baroque style and a paradigm of Beaux-Arts design principles. Designed by the noted architect Whitney Warren of the firm of Warren & Wetmore, this building established the firm's reputation. The clubhouse is one of their finest works and of an architectural merit equal to that of the firm's most famous commission, New York's Grand Central Terminal.

History

Founded in 1844 by a group of nine New York yachtsmen aboard a schooner anchored off the Battery, the New York Yacht Club was incorporated "for the purpose of encouraging yacht building and naval architecture and the cultivation of naval science."<sup>2</sup> These aims soon came to realization with the construction of the famous sailing yacht, America. In 1850, the New York Yacht Club was invited to enter the competition for the Royal Yacht Squadron Cup, Great Britain's most celebrated sailing prize. The race was scheduled as a postscript event to the first World's Fair, in London (1850).

A founding member of the club, Commodore John C. Stevens, and several associates took up the challenge. They commissioned George Steers, known to design the fastest pilot boats in New York, to supervise the construction of a yacht with which to enter the British race. Christened America, it was this vessel which, on August 22, 1851, swept past fifteen international competitors around the Isle of Wight to win the ornate silver cup which came to bear her name.<sup>3</sup>

After winning a second race, America was sold in England. Her career after her sale was extraordinary. Owned in succession by several Englishmen, she raced, with considerable success, during the rest of the 1850s. Beginning in 1861 she was involved in blockade running on behalf of the Confederate States and wound up scuttled in the St. John's River in Florida. Raised by the Federal Navy, she was put to work chasing other blockade runners off the coast of the Carolinas.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1

Quadrangle name Central Park, NY-NJ

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	8	5	8	5	9	7	0	4	5	1	1	8	7	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The building occupies Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1260, Lot 16, which is approximately 75' x 100' in size, as outlined on attached map.

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 H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date October 1985

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number

6

Page

2

Title: National Register of Historic Places

Date: 1982 Federal

Depository for survey records: National Register of Historic Places

City, Town: Washington State: DC

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

2

The light-filled, 2-story Entrance Hall, with walls of Caen marble, is dominated by a wide, red-carpeted marble staircase that leads like a glorified gangplank to a landing giving access to the Model Room to its left.

To the left of the stairs on the ground floor is what was called the Strangers' Room, where all non-members were detained until accompanied by a member. The room now contains the reception desk.

A short, narrow staircase at the left of the base of the stairs behind the Strangers' Room leads down from the Entrance Hall to the oak dining room, known as the Grill. This low-ceilinged room is constructed like the 'tween decks of an old ship. The shiplap planking of the walls is curved, and the oak beams and oak detailing are massive.

Originally, glass doors at the back of the Grill opened into the Billiard Room, where there were four billiard tables and a large fireplace. The connecting doors have been replaced with a wall, and the Billiard Room is now the Bar. The original tile and brass portable captain's stove from America rests in the fireplace of the Bar.

A short, curved double flight of steps leads up from the Bar to the domed circular Trophy Room, 25' in diameter and 2 stories high. This was originally a small cafe furnished with green leather chairs and sofas reminiscent of those in the owner's cabin of a turn-of-the-century yacht. It was put to its present use after World War II.

The Club's greatest room is the double-height Model Room, where the majority of the Club's models are housed. Until 1951 the owner of any boat participating in a race sponsored by the Club was required to give a half model to the Club. Many owners gave full models. In addition, all America's Cup defenders and challengers and all the great sailing and steam yachts of the turn of the century are represented among the roughly 1,000 models in the Club's various rooms.

The Model Room is 45' wide and 96' long, the latter dimension being the full depth of the building. In the long wall that contains the entrance door are four sets of French doors which open onto shallow carved balconies. Three of these balconies overlook the well of the Entrance Hall, and the fourth overlooks the Trophy Room.

Opposite the wide entrance to the Model Room is a monumental Caen stone fireplace and overmantel. There is a balcony around three sides of the Model Room that even extends behind the overmantel. A circular ship's stair leading to the balcony was planned but never executed, so that now the balcony is reached from the third-floor landing.

The ceiling of the Model Room, 26' above the floor, has a central stained-glass skylight. The room is dominated by the larger models in glass cases, while the fabric-covered walls have always been used for the display of half models.

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

For NPS use only

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

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

3

The 9,000-volume library-chartroom on the third floor extends across the front of the building. In the basement kitchen, the original oak iceboxes have been relined and converted into refrigerators. The original mahogany-paneled elevator, with its well-shined silver card tray secured in its bracket, still serves the building.

The only major interior changes to the club since construction have been additional bathrooms.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>This description of the exterior is adapted from the National Register of Historic Places nomination prepared by Nancy Goeschel of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1981.

<sup>2</sup>The interior description is an edited version of data appearing in Lucy Harvey Sydnor, "The Clubhouse of the New York Yacht Club," Antiques, CXVIII, No. 3 (September 1980), pp. 508-15.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

Date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

2

Next she was assigned to the Naval Academy, then temporarily in Newport, Rhode Island, as a training vessel, and returned to Annapolis, Maryland, with the Academy in 1866. After refitting, she participated in the defense of her cup in 1870, but placed fourth. She was auctioned by the Navy in 1873 and sold to Gen. Benjamin F. Butler. She remained in his family until 1917.

In that year, she was purchased and presented to the United States Naval Academy and returned to Annapolis, where she served as an historic attraction. In 1944, while in a shelter, her decaying hull was smashed by an icestorm that also destroyed her shelter. Her remains were broken up and became souvenirs, although her rudder is preserved at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut in the structure, once at Hoboken, New Jersey, that was the original clubhouse of the New York Yacht Club.

In 1857, the cup's owners presented it to the New York Yacht Club. The Club thus became the supervisor of the America's Cup races, which began in 1870.<sup>4</sup> George Schuyler, one of Stevens' cosponsors of America, convinced the other members to donate the cup, with the specification that it become a perpetual international trophy. No challenge was accepted until 1870, when Magic defeated Great Britain's Cambria. American yachts successfully defended the Cup 23 more times, against challenges from Canada, Britain, and Australia, until 1983, when an Australian yacht, Australia II, finally wrested it away.

Among the most exciting of these challenges were six between 1899 and 1930 by Sir Thomas Lipton's five yachts, successively named Shamrock, Shamrock II, etc. The especially exciting races between Lipton's Shamrock IV and Resolute, skippered by Charles Francis Adams, in 1920 were the closest series to that time.<sup>5</sup> Harold Vanderbilt's Enterprise, Rainbow, and Ranger successively turned back all comers in 1930, 1934, and 1937. The races were conducted in the New York Narrows-Sandy Hook area in 1870-1920. Since 1930, they have been held in the waters off Newport, Rhode Island.

The America's Cup competitions are only the most famous of the cruises and regattas that have been sponsored by the Club. The Club continues to encourage innovations and improvements in naval design.

The Yacht Club's first clubhouse was in Hoboken, New Jersey, where its regattas were held off the clubhouse promontory, and later on Staten Island. In 1871, the Club's burgeoning membership began demanding an increase in social activities and, in addition to the Staten Island house, rented rooms in a house at Madison Avenue and 27th Street in Manhattan. In 1884, all the club's shoreside activities were transferred to the Madison Avenue address.

By the 1890s, men's social clubs had become an established tradition in New York City. Rapidly growing memberships forced many clubs out of the brownstones they once comfortably occupied and into specially designed clubhouses. The Madison Avenue clubhouse of the New York Yacht Club was also becoming overcrowded with models and artifacts.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 3

In January of 1898, in keeping with this trend, a Yacht Club committee was formed to study the possibility of erecting a larger and more commodious clubhouse. Debate as to the site and the purposes the clubhouse should serve continued for several months until Commodore J. Pierpont Morgan prompted a decision by offering to purchase and donate the W. 44th Street site, if the Club would assure him of building a clubhouse and raise the annual dues from \$25 to \$50.

To secure a design for the new club, an architectural competition was held. Seven architects entered. On December 15, 1898, The New York Times announced that the designs of Whitney Warren of Warren & Wetmore had been selected by the Yacht Club building committee.<sup>6</sup> They had selected Warren's evocative Baroque design over a more conventional one submitted by George A. Freeman. Warren explained upon presentation of his plans:

This being a club for a special purpose namely the furtherance of naval architecture from an amateur standpoint, we consider that externally and internally the arrangements should be such as to place the subject in evidence, and not to retire it and make the clubhouse appear as that of merely a social club.<sup>7</sup>

This fanciful Beaux-Arts design, which incorporated images of marine life and naval architecture, was both imaginative and daring. At the same time, the carefully planned elevation, the clear expression of the interior plan, and the fine scaling and disposition of the architectural detail, demonstrate Warren's sound understanding of the traditional theories and principles of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>This text (except as noted below under 3-5) is based on the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report, The New York Yacht Club Building (LP-1019), September 11, 1979, by Ruth Selden-Sturgill, which was essentially incorporated into the National Register of Historic Places nomination cited in Note 1 of the Description.

<sup>2</sup>New York Yacht Club Yearbook, 1944, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>America's history is summarized from Robert W. Carrick, The Pictorial History of the America's Cup Races (New York: Viking, 1964), pp. 18-26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 173-187; and World Almanac, 1985, p. 886, were the sources of this summary.

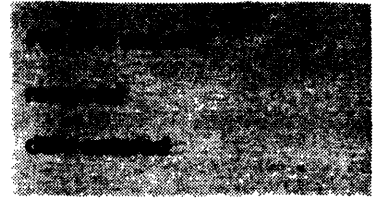
<sup>5</sup>Grantland Rice, "The Victory of the Resolute," Esquire's Great Men and Moments in Sports (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 229-231.

<sup>6</sup>New York Times, December 15, 1898, 5:4.

<sup>7</sup>New York Times, December 9, 1900, 23:4.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

9

Page 1

Bibliography

"Accepted Design for the New York Yacht Club," Architectural Review, 6 (1899): 40-41.

Carrick, Robert W. The Pictorial History of the America's Cup Races. New York: Viking, 1964.

New York Times: January 30, 1898, 15:2; October 28, 1898, 6:7; December 15, 1898, 5:4; and December 9, 1900, 23:4.

"The New York Yacht Club," Architectural Record, 10 (April 1901): 417-424.

Parkinson, John. The History of the New York Yacht Club from its Founding through 1973. New York: The New York Yacht Club, 1975.

Rice, Grantland, "The Victory of the Resolute," Esquire's Great Men and Moments in Sports. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. Pp. 229-231.

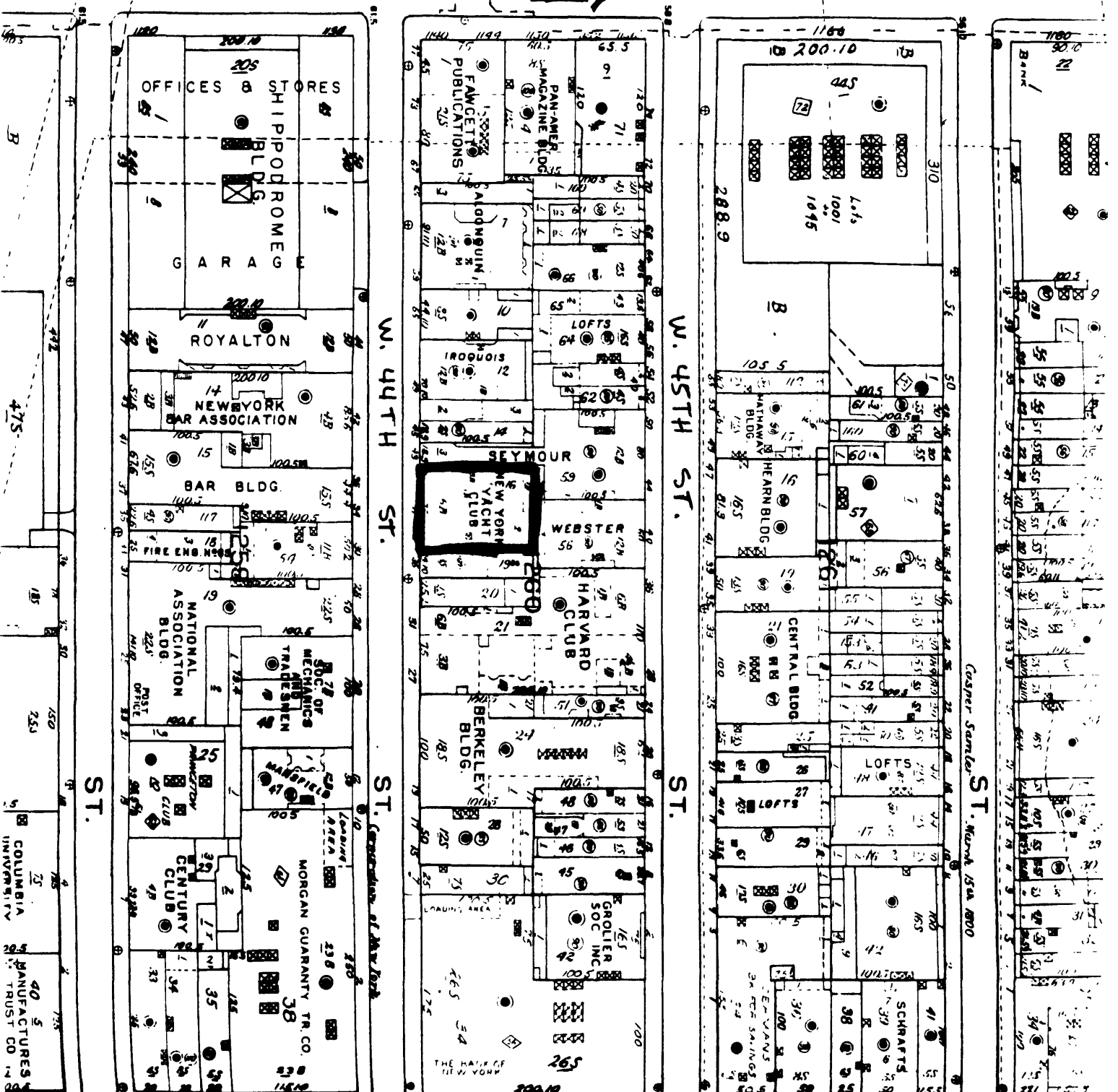
Sydnor, Lucy Harvey. "The Clubhouse of the New York Yacht Club," Antiques, CXVIII, No. 3 (September 1980), pp. 508-515.

NEW YORK YACHT CLUB 37 W. 44th St.  
 New York County, New York  
 Manhattan Land Book, Plate 72  
 New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1981

Nomination boundary  
 indicated by heavy line

AVE. OF

THE AMERICAS



W. 44TH ST.

W. 45TH ST.

ST. Casper St. at New York

Casper St. at Mark St. 15th. 8000

ST.

ST.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
 MANUFACTURES TRUST CO.

HOTEL DIPLOMAT

MANUFACTURES TRUST CO.

1. Parry Avenue Entrance Gates
2. Maintenance Building (Administration Building)
- 2a. Washington Avenue Entrance Gates
3. D.A.R. Building (Continental Oil Building)
4. Centennial Building (Transportation/Chrysler Building)
5. Hall of State (State of Texas Building)
6. Automobile Building
7. Old Mill Inn (Morten Milling Company Building)
8. Margo Jones Theater (Magnolia Lounge)
9. Sesquicentennial Headquarters (Hall of Religion)
10. Music Hall
11. Food & Fiber Building (Agriculture Building)
12. Embarcadero Building (Foods Building)
13. Agriculture Building (Pan American Building)
14. Livestock Building #2
15. Cotton Bowl
16. Tower Building (U.S. Government Building)
17. Women's Building
18. Museum of Natural History
19. Grand Avenue Entrance Gates
20. Dallas Museum of Fine Arts
21. Band Shell
22. M. L. King Entrance Gates
23. Garden Center
24. Model House
25. Science Place
26. Aquarium
27. Police Building (Christian Science Monitor Building)
28. Midway
29. Communications Building (Fire, Police & Hospital Building)
30. Coliseum
31. Agriculture & Livestock Complex

- A. Grand Plaza
- B. Esplanade of State
- C. Texas Court of Honor
- D. Agrarian Parkway
- E. The Chute
- F. Federal Concourse
- G. Constitution Place
- H. Stadium Plaza
- I. Reagan Plaza
- J. Lagoon
- K. Centennial Drive
- L. M. L. K. Entrance Vista
- M. Grand Entrance Vista

Proposed Boundaries: Fair Park  
Historic District

McKENZIE ST

