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(Rev. 8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: Triangle Shirtwaist Factory

other name/site number: Asch Building, Brown Building

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2. Location

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street & number: 23-29 Washington Place

not for publication: ___

city/town: New York vicinity: _

state: NY county: New York code: 061 zip code: 10003

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. ___ See continuation sheet.

_____ _____
Signature of certifying official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

_____ _____
Signature of commenting or other official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register _____ _____
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the _____ _____
National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the _____ _____
National Register
____ removed from the National Register _____ _____

____ other (explain): _____

_____ _____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: Commerce, Industry/retail, Workshops — Sub: _____

Current: Education/classrooms, Offices — Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Neo-Renaissance

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation unknown; walls brick with stone base and terra-cotta trim; roof asphalt; other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. _X_ See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, B

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : _____

Areas of Significance: Economics
Industry
Politics/Government
Social History

Periods of Significance: 1901-1911

Significant Dates: 1911

Significant Person(s): Rose Schneiderman
Mary Breier
Clara Lemlich

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: John Woosley

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
_X_ See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

_X_ See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_ previously listed in the National Register
_ previously determined eligible by the National Register
_ designated a National Historic Landmark
_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_ State historic preservation office
_ Other state agency
_ Federal agency
_ Local government
X University
_ Other -- Specify Repository: Archives at NYU

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	584800	4509060	B	__	_____	_____
C	__	_____	_____	D	__	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

The boundaries of this nomination are coterminous with New York City Block 547 Lot 8, as shown on the attached Manhattan Land Book map. The rectangular lot, located on the northwest corner of Washington Place and Greene Street, measures 100.8 feet on the north and south and 100 feet on the east and west.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

The historic association is coterminous with the limit of the urban lot (Block 547 Lot 8) upon which the building stands.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Dr. Page Putnam Miller, Director, NCC

Organization National Coordinating Committee For the Promotion of History Date September 26, 1989

Street & Number 400 A Street, SE Telephone (202) 544-2422

City or Town Washington State DC ZIP 20003

The Brown Building, originally known as the Asch Building, was built in 1901 by Joseph Asch. John Woosley was the architect. The ground level was retail and the upper levels all workshops. In 1902 the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory moved into the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of the building. In 1911 following the Shirtwaist Factory Fire, the building was repaired and called the Greenwich Building. Soon after this, Frederick Brown bought the building. In 1916 New York University rented the eighth floor for classrooms and next year rented additional space. In 1929 Frederick Brown gave the building to the university, which in turn renamed the building after Brown.

The Brown Building is located at 23-29 Washington Place on the northwest corner of Greene Street in the Washington Square area of Greenwich Village in the borough of Manhattan, New York County, New York. Built as an industrial loft structure, the Brown Building is now owned by New York University which uses the building for classrooms and offices. The building is in the midst of an area, one block east of Washington Square, that was built up with similarly scaled loft buildings during the last years of the nineteenth century and first years of the twentieth century. Most of these buildings are also now owned by New York University. Immediately to the north of the Brown Building is an eleven story commercial building located at the southwest corner of Waverly Place and Greene Street and an eight-story loft building on Waverly Place between Washington Square East and Greene Street. Immediately to the west of the Brown Building is the eleven story Main Building of NYU; this was originally NYU's Law School. To the south of the Brown Building, across Washington Place, and to the east, across Greene Street, are more loft buildings. There are also several more recent NYU buildings in the area.

The Brown Building is a ten-story neo-Renaissance style building with a stone base and brick upper walls with terra-cotta trim. On the front facade, facing onto Washington Place, the two-story stone base is articulated by five massive limestone pilasters with recessed granite bands and terra-cotta capitals. Each capital is ornamented with a band of fleur-de-lis and an egg-and-dart molding. The entrance, at the west end of the facade is flanked by two of the pilasters. The wide entrance is set within a stone enframement that is decorated with egg-and-dart and bead-and-reel moldings. The enframement has a frieze and a cornice supported by brackets. The entrance is divided into three sections, each capped by a transom. In the center are new double doors. The transoms are enclosed and the side panels covered with modern tile and glass infill. The three remaining bays on the front elevation also have modern infill. On the second floor, each of four bays is separated into three windows by cast-iron piers. The pilasters of the base do not reflect the massing of the building above. On Washington Place, the upper facade contains slightly projecting, three bayed end pavilions. These are set between a six bayed central section. The third floor of each end pavilion is marked by quoins and in the upper corners of this level are cartouches. The upper floors of the end pavilions are

marked by simple rectangular windows; the central window is slightly wider than those to either side. Beginning above the fourth floor are recessed brick panels with terra-cotta egg-and-dart frames.

In the central section, floors three through nine are articulated by individual end windows and paired central windows separated by fluted cast-iron Corinthian columns. Between the fifth and sixth floors and seventh and eighth floors are recessed brick panels similar to those on the end pavilions. Flat terra-cotta bands run across the entire facade at lintel and still levels. Above the ninth floor is a round-arched arcade. Each end pavilion contains three arches with terra-cotta enframements with fluted Ionic pilasters and projecting keystones. The building is crowned by a deeply projecting galvanized-iron modillioned cornice.

The Greene Street elevation is similar to that on Washington Place, but is somewhat simpler. The base of this elevation is marked by seven pilasters; the first two and the last two are stone, the others are brick. There is an entrance at the north end of this facade that is similar to the main entrance. The projecting and pavilions on Greene Street are similar to those on Washington Place, but the four bays of the central section are divided by brick pilasters with terra-cotta capitals at the ninth floor. All of the central windows are individual openings. The tenth floor has a continuous round-arched arcade.

The Brown Building occupies almost its entire lot; there is a tiny court at the northwest corner of the lot. This nomination includes one contributing building. The experior of the building retains its integrity to a very high degree. Exterior alterations are limited to the ground floor where the original commercial fronts have been filled in. The entrance doors and their surrounds are modern. The interior has been extensively remodeled for classrooms and offices. There are no remaining interior signs of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. The sweat shop of the early 20th century has been totally replaced by modern New York University classrooms. However, the events that took place in this building have not been forgotten. Each year the International Ladies Garment Workers Union meets outside the Brown Building to commemorate the lives lost in the fire.

Historical Significance:

The Brown Building in New York City stands as a reminder of both the triumph and the tragedy of the labor movement in early twentieth century America. There on the afternoon of March 25, 1911, one of the worst industrial disasters in American history struck the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. Fire swept through the building, and when the flames were quenched, 146 workers, most of them young women, were dead. Over a third of them leaped a hundred feet to their deaths, their hair and clothing in flames; the rest suffocated or were burned beyond recognition. The tragedy shocked the nation and galvanized the labor movement to press for progressive factory legislation. At a memorial meeting following the fire, the first steps were taken which led to the formation of the New York Factory Investigation Commission, a group which succeeded in lobbying for pioneering safety and health measures. The victims of the fire are commemorated yearly by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) as a symbol of American labor. Within the context of the National Historic Landmarks program thematic framework, the Brown Building has national significance under theme: XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements. (H) Labor Organizations.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was housed in the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of the Asch building, a ten-story structure located near Washington Square. The Asch Building had been built in 1901, and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory moved in the next year. The structure is now known as the Brown Building and is owned by New York University.

At the time of the fire, the factory was the largest of its kind in New York City, and was considered a model establishment by city standards. But working conditions in the factory were typical of most garment shops of the era: there were no effective regulations for safety, sanitation, or the welfare of the worker. These conditions motivated the first great strike of women workers during the twentieth century and also led to the Triangle fire.

In the early years of the century, the clothing trade was the largest industry in New York. The shirtwaist business had begun in the 1890's and it grew rapidly after the turn of the century. It developed along with the rapid increase of white collar work for women, for the shirtwaist--a white high-necked blouse worn with a long dark skirt--was the uniform of the teacher, office clerk, saleswoman and the switchboard operator. Some 40,000 workers, four out of five of them women, were employed in the shirtwaist factories which had sprung up to meet the demand for the garments.[1]

Two-thirds of the waistmakers were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and their daughters, although smaller numbers of Italian, black, and native-born white women worked in the trade as well. Most toiled in buildings where sewing machines

dripping oil, rested on wooden tables jammed together amid piles of cloth and material. The air was heavy with flammable lint. Narrow staircases descended through drafty wells, doors opened inward, and the sound of machines was deafening. There were no sprinklers--no law required them.[2]

Shirtwaist makers in New York and Philadelphia protested the intolerable conditions in the shops. In the fall of 1909, the Triangle Company fired 150 workers because of their union sympathies. The owners claimed there was no work for them. When they advertised the open positions the next day, the shirtwaist local of the ILGWU declared a strike. Picketers were harassed by thugs and prostitutes hired by the factory owners. Thousands attended a rally at Cooper Union in November, where such labor leaders as Samuel Gompers and Mary Dreier of the New York Women's Trade Union League spoke. At that meeting, a young worker named Clara Lemlich called for a general strike to expand the protest to include conditions in the garment industry, and the two thousand workers and supporters in attendance instantly agreed. Soon over 20,000 workers representing about 500 factories walked off their jobs.

The subsequent walk-out has been called the "Uprising of the Twenty Thousand". It was the first large-scale strike of women workers in American history. The strikers held out for thirteen weeks. By February, the strike had ended. Individual settlements were made with each factory. The Triangle strikers received only a partial settlement. Although they gained a small wage increase, their demand for working fire escapes and open doors was not met. The owners feared open doors provided access for union organizers, and that unlocked doors might also enable workers to steal thread or a few minutes of leisure time. Despite the limited outcome of the strike, historians suggest it helped to shape a strong labor movement in the Northeast and it built the membership base of the nascent ILGWU.[3]

The failure of the company to meet the safety demands had tragic consequences. The fire began with a muffled explosion on a late Saturday afternoon, and spread rapidly. Many of the 500 workers in the building reached the elevators and the one open stairway, but others were trapped behind crowds of people, or found their exit barred by locked doors. To the horror of factory operatives pushing their way to the eighth floor windows, the fire department's ladders reached only to the sixth floor. Although fire fighters spread nets below, these were flimsy and torn by falling NPS bodies. Most of the victims died within a half an hour of the outbreak of the fire. Many more were injured. On April 5, an estimated 80,000 mourners marched for four hours up Fifth Avenue in a drenching rainstorm to attend the funeral of the victims; the parade was watched by over a quarter of a million people.[4]

Public outrage swept the city, and numerous protest and memorial meetings were held in the following weeks. At a memorial meeting held at the Metropolitan Opera House, Rose Schneiderman, a young garment worker and organizer for the New York

Women's Trade Union League, made a bitter speech denouncing American labor conditions. "I would be a traitor to those poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship," she said. "...This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city....Every year thousands of us are maimed...I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves, and the only way is through a strong working-class movement."[5] Schneiderman's passionate speech has been credited with swinging public opinion to the side of the labor movement, and as a historian Bonnie Mitelman suggests, Schneiderman motivated "concerned civic, religious, and labor leaders to mobilize their efforts for desperately needed safety and industrial reforms."[6]

The protest meetings led to a State Commission to Improve Factory Safety, chaired by State Senator Robert Wagner and co-chaired by State Legislator Alfred E. Smith. Additionally, a Bureau of Fire Prevention, the New York Citizen's Committee on Safety, and other regulatory and investigatory groups were formed as a result of public demand after the fire. Within the next four years a battery of bills was passed which included regulations to safeguard the life and health of workers, shorten the work week, and enforce existing legislation; by 1914, thirty-six new labor laws were on the books in the state of New York.[7]

Historian Joseph Raybeck has suggested that the Triangle disaster revived a concern with health and safety in the workplace which had been of importance in the nineteenth century, but "might have been forgotten if it had not been for the [fire]"; another historian called it the blaze that "changed an industry."[8] This concern was more than local; many states mandated new safety standards and enforced more severe punishments for infractions after the fire. During this era, of course, such public legislation was enacted only on the state level; it would not be until the New Deal legislation of the 1930's that the federal government took on the responsibility of welfare reform.

The events at the Triangle factory continue to be cited by scholars as a turning point in American labor history. The fire has been credited with changing both factory and fire prevention laws throughout the nation. On the fiftieth anniversary of the fire, a plaque was installed on a corner of the Brown building and dedicated to the memory of the Triangle victims. The ceremony was attended not only by elderly survivors of the fire, but also by Eleanor Roosevelt and former U.S. Secretary of Labor Francis Perkins, who as a young woman had witnessed the catastrophe. The plaque reads: "Out of their martyrdom came new concepts of social responsibility and labor legislation that have helped make American working conditions the finest in the world."[9]

[1] Nancy Woloch, Women and the American Experience (New York, 1984), 202-203

[2] Corinne J. Naden, The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, March 25, 1911: The Blaze That Changed an Industry. (New York, 1971), 8-9.

[3] Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, We Were There; The Story of Working Women in America (New York, 1977), 293-4.

[4] Philip S. Foner, Women and the American Labor Movement from Colonial Times to the Eve of World War I (New York, 1979), 360.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Bonnie Mitelman, "Rose Schneiderman and the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire," in American Experiences, eds. Randy Roberts and James S. Olson (Glenview, Il, 1986), 97.

[7] Corinne J. Naden, The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire March 25, 1911: The Blaze That Changed an Industry (New York, 1971), 47.

[8] Joseph Raybeck, A History of American Labor (New York, 1966), 263-64.

[9] Marion Tinling, Women Remembered; A Guide to Landmarks of Women's History in the United States (New York, 1986), 406.

Bibliographic References:

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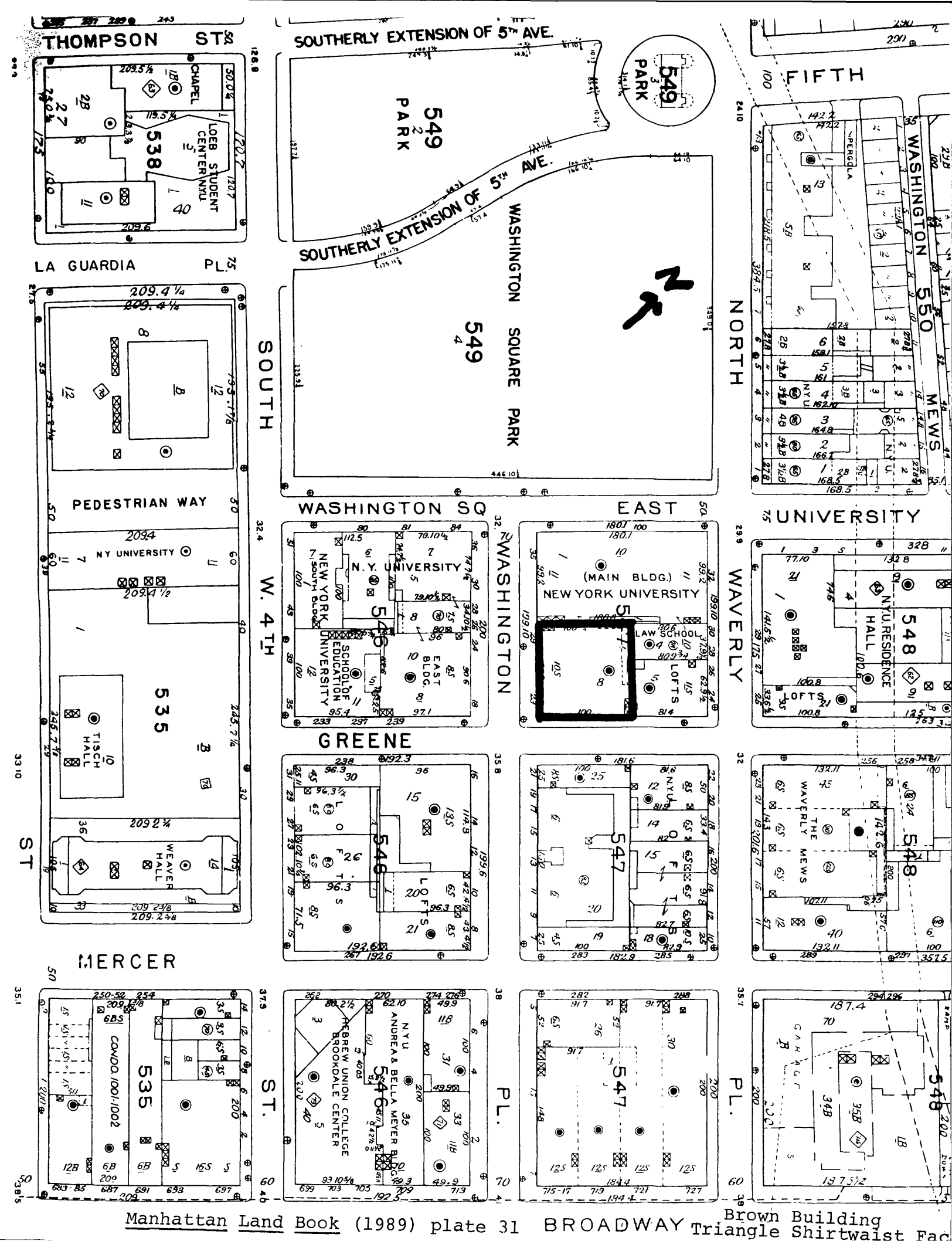

Manhattan Land Book (1989) plate 31 BROADWAY Brown Building Triangle Shirtwaist Fac