

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## 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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Women's National Republican Club

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 3 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street [ ] not for publication

city or town Manhattan [ ] vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10020

### 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 as 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 [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard A. Purpant

DBHPO

12/28/12  
Date

Signature of certifying official/Title

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 the Keeper

date of action

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

**Women's National Republican Club****New York County, New York**

Name of Property

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**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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

0

buildings  
sites  
structures  
objects  
**TOTAL**

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ Clubhouse

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ Clubhouse

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND EARLY20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/

Neo-Georgian

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls Stone

roof Membrane

other Glass

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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Women's National Republican Club

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Women's National Republican Club

DESCRIPTION

The Women's National Republican Club (WNRC) is located at 3-5 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street, on the north side of West 51<sup>st</sup> Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues. The boundaries of the property are described as Manhattan Tax Block 1267, Lot 30. Built 1932 to 1934 to designs by Frederic Rhineland King, the WNRC is a nine-story club house in a somewhat stripped down neo-Georgian style. It faces the northern edge of Rockefeller Center, whose early buildings date to the same years but are much more modern in style. On the north side of 51<sup>st</sup> Street, the WNRC's neighbors are commercial and office buildings from various periods.

Exterior

The sole visible elevation is the principal, south, elevation on West 51<sup>st</sup> Street. It is a nine-story stone-faced building, with a recessed tenth story for utilities. A shallow setback above the fifth story effectively creates the image of an older building, with three stories above a basement topped by an attic story. The sixth and seventh stories repeat the design of the lower stories, while the eighth story is a steep mansard roof with dormers, atop which is an open terrace for the ninth-story solarium.

Though contemporary accounts described the building as "Colonial," they apparently referred to the club's interiors. The building's exterior design is a severe neo-classical composition, three bays wide, with spare Georgian detailing suggesting the early Americana of the interiors. The first story is occupied by two store fronts flanking a central entrance porch, with a streamlined molding surround, within which is set an entrance with double doors. A metal railing extends across the entire façade directly above the first story, creating a shallow balcony for the three floor-to-ceiling multi-light windows of the *piano nobile* of the second story. Those windows are set within severe stone moldings, each with a simple molded keystone at the top center. Each window is flanked by a pair of flagpoles, for a total of four. The central window is topped by a stone relief of two American eagles – one facing east and one facing west – supporting between them a large roundel inscribed 'THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL REPUBLICAN CLUB MCMXXI (referring to the date of the club's founding).

The second- and third-story windows are simple rectangular openings with simple stone sills and simplified keystones. A projecting band course sets off the fifth, or attic, story, which has five smaller windows in plain rectangular openings, topped by a plain cornice. The windows at the sixth and seventh stories are similar to those at the fifth story. The tiled, eighth-story mansard roof has five projecting dormer windows, each capped by a triangular pediment. The ninth-story terrace is set back above the mansard roof, while the utilitarian tenth story is set back far enough to be largely invisible from the street.

Interior

The club's principal spaces and public rooms are located on the first floor, second floor, second floor mezzanine, and third and fourth floors, as well as the ninth floor solarium. A third floor mezzanine is reserved

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for offices and ancillary spaces; the fifth floor consists of offices now used by the Lamb's Club, and the sixth, seventh and eighth floors are dedicated to guest rooms.

*First Floor – Lobby*

The main entrance leads into a small square vestibule with a shallow groin-vaulted ceiling. Double doors lead into a long, narrow hallway with plaster walls and a coved ceiling, lit by a chandelier and wall sconces. At the far end, a segmental-arched opening, whose curve matches the curve of the coved ceiling, leads into the main lobby space. The lobby has plain walls and ceiling, and a black-and-white checkerboard tiled floor, and is lit by a chandelier and wall sconces. Segmental-arched openings lead to a cloak room on the east and a blind arch on the west. Additional doors with simple rectangular surrounds lead to ancillary spaces and rest rooms. At the far end of the lobby, on the western side, a grand staircase, on whose walls hang portraits of various club members, rises in an elegant curve to the second story. On the eastern side are two elevators.

*Second Floor*

The grand staircase leads to a large elevator foyer on the second floor. The foyer has a checkerboard tile floor. To the south is the Grand Ballroom, to the north the Maude Wetmore Room.

*Grand Ballroom*

The major space on the second floor is the double height Grand Ballroom, now called the Davis Ballroom, with a wood floor and plaster walls and ceiling. This is the *piano nobile* of the club visible on the exterior, with three grand floor-to-ceiling windows in the façade. Major features include a wide entrance from the elevator lobby of the second floor, with paneled folding doors, above which is a curving balcony with a metal railing and an entrance from the second floor mezzanine; two large chandeliers hang from the ceiling, in whose center is an octagonal glass skylight. Secondary doors to either side of the main entrance have segmentally-curved fanlights with neo-Georgian ornamental detail. Above a mirror on the west wall is a gilded bas-relief of the "Great Seal of the United States."

*Maude Wetmore Room*

The Wetmore Room is a smaller room with plain plaster walls and ceiling and a wooden floor. On the east wall is a neo-Georgian stone fireplace. On the north wall, two windows flank a central French door which gives onto a simple back terrace. Two doors on the west wall lead to ancillary spaces. The room is lit by wall sconces, two small ceiling light fixtures, and down lights.

*Second Floor Mezzanine*

From the second floor elevator foyer, two ancillary staircases, one on the east and one on the west, lead to the second floor mezzanine elevator foyer. That foyer is used as a dining area. It has a checkerboard tiled floor

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similar to the floor in the lobby, simple plaster walls and ceiling, and is lit by chandeliers and wall sconces. A door on the south opens onto the mezzanine balcony of the Grand Ballroom. Doors on the north lead to a second, more formal dining area.

*Formal Dining Area and Bar*

The formal dining area has a wooden floor and simple plaster walls, a new acoustical tile ceiling, and a modest fireplace on the east wall. The west wall has an arched opening leading to the bar. Paneled wood doors have simple rectangular surrounds. There are three windows in the north wall.

The bar has a wood floor, plaster walls, and a new acoustical tile ceiling with down lights. It has two windows in the north wall.

*Third Floor*

The third floor elevator vestibule has a checkerboard tiled floor; elevator and door surrounds have ornamental keystone volutes at the center. On the west side is a large door topped by a neo-Georgian pediment leading to a staircase. On the north side is a blind round arch with a mirror, and the entrance to a kitchen. On the south side is the entrance to the Grand Salon.

*Grand Salon*

The main public room on the third floor is the Grand Salon, with three large windows on the façade. Two chandeliers hang from the plaster ceiling; there are plaster walls and a wood floor. In the center of the east and west walls is an elaborate fireplace with a mantel, topped by a frame holding a mirror, rising to a triangular pediment topped by an anthemion at the wall molding just below the ceiling, with smaller-anthemion to either side; each fireplace is flanked by a pair of statuettes. The fireplaces are believed to come from the Carnegie mansion that formerly stood on the site.

*Fourth Floor*

A staircase similar to the main lobby staircase, with an ornamental metal railing, leads to the fourth floor.

*Foyer*

The elevator foyer is divided into three spaces – two arched openings on the north end lead, on the east to the elevators, and on the west to a half-flight of stairs leading to the Coolidge Library on the west and the Lincoln Room on the north. On the south, the foyer leads to the Pratt Lounge. The terrazzo floor is in a geometric pattern.

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*Pratt Lounge*

The Pratt Lounge is arranged as a sitting room. It has three large segmental arch windows on the south wall, plaster walls and ceiling, and a carpeted floor. It is lit by lamps and wall sconces. Ornamental details include two blind segmentally arched recesses, with a simple keystone at the center of the arch on the east wall, used as book cases, flanking a central fireplace and mantel, and a similar fireplace and mantel on the west wall.

*Coolidge Library*

The Coolidge Library is a rectangular space lined on the south and west walls with wood paneling and wood bookcases. There is a marble fireplace in the center of the west wall above which hangs a portrait of Calvin Coolidge. There is a large window in the north wall. The east wall is plain. The library is lit by chandeliers, wall sconces and lamps.

*The Lincoln Room*

The Lincoln Room is a rectangular room with plaster walls and ceiling and a wood floor. Paneled wood doorways are set in simple rectangular surrounds. The room is lit with chandeliers and wall sconces, and is hung with Lincoln memorabilia. There is a marble fireplace at the east end. There are three large rectangular windows in the north wall.

**Ninth Floor**

The ninth floor includes small bedrooms, and a large solarium on the south side. The solarium has a plaster ceiling and three plaster walls, and a checkerboard tiled floor. The entire south wall is made of large glass panes in a metal frame, with large metal radiator covers, and three sets of double doors leading out to a shallow exterior terrace with square flagstones and a brick parapet. The solarium is lit by two chandeliers, and has a marble fireplace at the west end and a floor to ceiling mirror opposite it at the east end.

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**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 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 that 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 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance:**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social HistoryArchitecture**Period of Significance:**1932 - 1934**Significant Dates:**1932 - 1934**Significant Person:**n/a**Cultural Affiliation:**n/a**Architect/Bullder:**Frederic Rhineland King**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 Building Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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Women's National Republican Club

The Women's National Republican Club, at 3 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street in Manhattan, New York City, was built 1932-34 as the third home for the institution that was founded in 1920. The club is eligible under National Register Criteria A in the area of social history for its association with the Republican political party and the increased establishment of women's clubs following the adoption of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution that gave women the vote. Following its formation, the WNRC took the next step of encouraging women to engage in partisan politics. Founder and first president Henrietta Wells Livermore – a major figure in the women's suffrage movement – imagined the club as a major force in educating newly enfranchised women voters. From the beginning, the club offered lectures and seminars, and a School of Politics. The WNRC quickly outgrew its first two homes and built its current home in the depths of the Depression. The club is additionally eligible under Criteria C in the area of architecture as an example of the work architect Frederic Rhinelander King, who designed the building in the neo-Georgian mode. Despite the rise of various forms of modernism of the period – and a location directly across the street from Rockefeller Center – the Club's architectural design and interior spaces follows a trend in private club decoration, evoking an interest in early American design tastes and history.

The Women's Social Club Movement: Beginnings in the Post Civil War Period

The Women's National Republican Club appears to grow out of several different movements, notably the development of private clubs for women in the post-Civil War decades, and the fight for women's suffrage culminating in the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution of 1920.

It is generally believed that the first women's club was the Sorosis Club in New York, founded by journalist Jane Cunningham Croly in 1868, after she had been denied permission to attend a men-only banquet at the New York Press Association honoring Charles Dickens. According to Croly's later reminiscences, the very thought of a "secular organization composed entirely of women for the purpose of bringing all kinds of women together to work out their own objects in their own way" was considered revolutionary, and a threat to the established order.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the idea became popular, leading to the founding of chapters of Sorosis in other cities.

According to historians Frank Kowsky and Martin Wachadlo:

For upper and middle-class women, such organizations provided a forum outside of home for the discussion of books, ideas, and other cultural pursuits at a time when women had little access to higher education. These associations also allowed women the opportunity to acquire skills that mimicked those possessed by the opposite sex in the business world. As historian of the women's club movement Karen Blair has stated, men generally regarded women as morally inferior, physically frail, and mentally weak, suited only for the sphere of domestic life. These new organizations gave women experience in managing their own affairs, as they served on boards of directors, learned to keep accounts, and

<sup>1</sup> Jane Cunningham Croly, *The History of the Women's Club Movement in America* (New York: Henry G. Allen & Co., 1898), 18.



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participated in formal systems of governance. Managerial skills became more and more important as the clubs began to acquire property and to build club houses that rivaled in scale and importance those erected by men for their private clubs. Yet, clubwomen often faced fierce criticism for their efforts. "Newspaper editorials deplored clubwomen's intrusion into the public sphere," states Blair, "and their alleged neglect of child care and household responsibilities."<sup>2</sup> Clubwomen were undeterred, however, and by 1910, there were over a million of them throughout the United States.... In 1890, when, at the invitation of Croly, sixty-three clubs united together to form the General Federation of Women's Clubs (headquartered in Washington and housed in a building enjoying National Historic Landmark status), the movement became a firmly established progressive force in American life.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the clubs focused on social events, but some — like the Twentieth Century Club in Buffalo, NY — were devoted to art and culture. The Women's National Republican Club focused primarily on national partisan politics.

**Henrietta Wells Livermore and the Founding the Women's National Republican Club**

Henrietta Wells Livermore (1864-1933) — also known as Mrs. Arthur L. Livermore — was an important figure in the movement for women's suffrage, and a major player in Republican politics. As summarized by her *New York Times* obituary, she was...

...a close friend of former Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover.... and a national figure for years in the campaign that finally triumphed for women's suffrage.... [Following her marriage and move to Yonkers she] was active in civic matters in Yonkers and managed the Fairview Garden School under the Russell Sage Foundation. She was founder and first president of the Women's University Club of New York City and also... vice president of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association and former member of the National Woman Suffrage Committee. Mrs. Livermore was the first woman to be vice chairman of the New York State Republican Committee and also the first woman to act as vice chairman of the Westchester County Republican Committee. She organized and was formerly president of the Women's Republican Club of Westchester and at one time was a member of the executive committee of the Republican National Committee, having had charge of the organization of the Republican women in the Eastern States in the campaigns to elect Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover.<sup>4</sup>

An account of her life published by the Women's National Republican Club recounted some of her more unconventional actions as a young woman at Wellesley College:

While at Wellesley, she was a tennis champion for four years. She rebelled at the wearing of encumbering garments for active sports. One day she shocked the authorities by appearing on the courts in her gymnasium bloomers and was ordered to put on a skirt. She obeyed, but when she had to run for a

<sup>2</sup> Karen Blair, "Women's Club Movement," *Oxford Companion to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> Century Club, National Register Nomination, Frank Kowsky & Martin Wachadlo. 2009

<sup>4</sup> "Mrs. A.L. Livermore is Dead in Yonkers," *New York Times*, October 16, 1933, p.17.

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whizzing shot over the net, she made a great leap and tore the skirt from hem to belt, thus achieving a freedom in sports apparel for women.<sup>5</sup>

That same account outlines Livermore's suffrage activities:

Henrietta's interest moved from civic affairs, to suffrage, and then to the Republican Party. She was a member of the New York State Board of the Women's Suffrage Party and did her part to bring suffrage to women. On February 14, 1910, twelve women met at Henrietta's home to organize a revitalized suffrage movement for the State of New York.

Henrietta was among the suffragists who believed that women needed better and broader education along political lines. As part of the suffrage movement classes for women were organized. By 1916 *The Blue Book - Woman Suffrage: History, Arguments And Results* was published by National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company, Inc. In conjunction with *The Blue Book*, the same organization published a booklet by Henrietta titled *The Blue Book Suffrage School*. This publication laid out a plan for a Suffrage School using and referring to *The Blue Book*. Another booklet Henrietta wrote was *How To Raise Money For Suffrage*.

According to a profile in the *Brooklyn Eagle*:

If the dictionary were searched for the one word that would best described Henrietta W. Livermore, better known in Republican circles as Mrs. Arthur L. Livermore, that word would unmistakably be "pioneer." The pioneer spirit permeates everything she does and her whole attitude of mind. It has made her the best known woman in New York State Republican politics, and one of the best known in the United States....

The one dominating interest of Mrs. Livermore has always been education, whether academic or political. She has two degrees from Wellesley College and is a member of the Association of University Women. She was one of the founders and the first president of the Women's University Club. In 1919 she took hold in the suffrage campaign and was named "Old Litt" because of her literary efforts for the cause....

Mrs. Livermore's greatest political interest lies in education. "I feel one of the biggest jobs I put over while chairman of the Republican Women's State Executive Committee," she said, "was the 'Political Plattsburg,' which was a great political educational movement for women. This was extended to many places...."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Founding President Henrietta Wells Livermore," *The Women's National Republican Club's 90th Anniversary, 1921-2011* (Women's National Republican Club, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Esther A. Coster, "'Delivering the Vote' Is Real Secret of Political Power, Says Mrs. Livermore," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1924 [scanned version at [www.fultonhistory.com](http://www.fultonhistory.com), specific date missing; p.12.]

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And another account:

Mrs. Livermore began her political activities during the campaign for suffrage. A major part of the literature distributed by proponents of suffrage in the strenuous and exciting days before their goal was achieved, was written by Mrs. Livermore and in so far as the written word is an instrument for influencing opinion she may be credited with having been a powerful force in winning the vote for her sex.<sup>7</sup>

Having helped American women win the right to vote, Livermore turned to the logical next step: encouraging women to become active in political parties. One year after the passing of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, she founded the Women's National Republican Club. In 1931, on the club's tenth anniversary, Livermore described the evolution of her thinking on the subject:

Women were given the vote by New York State in 1917, the first Eastern state to do so. In my work as Chairman of the Women's State Executive Committee of New York State and later as a member of the National Committee, I realized more and more that the women voters would need a long course in political education, would need an organization of their own which would build up their political morale and stimulate their interest, and that they would also need a meeting place where they could become acquainted with other women voters who had like interest and problems.

Accordingly with this in view I called together immediately after our first National Election in Nov. 1920, prominent Republican women from different States, women representatives from all the larger Republican organizations, from the various committees for Presidential candidates, and from various campaign committees with the purpose of forming a Club. This committee was inclusive and not exclusive. After weeks of work, The Women's National Republican Club was formed and was incorporated 10 years ago today.<sup>8</sup>

In her opening speech to the club membership in 1921, Livermore explained the club's purpose:

The purpose of the Women's National Republican Club is to provide a Club House for Republican women, where they may help form intelligent political opinions, that they may be of greater service to the Republican party and to the Nation.

...The Club membership is composed of loyal Republican women, who firmly believe in Republican principles and who are not blown about by every changing political wind of doctrine, women who believe that the most effective way to accomplish political results is to work in the ranks with the party of their choice and who know that such methods promote increased responsiveness to the ideals of the party membership, women who are proud of the record of the great constructive party of the nation, and

<sup>7</sup> "Eastern Republican Women Look to Yonkers for Campaign Leader," *Yonkers Herald Statesman*, October 10, 1932, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Henrietta Livermore, "Presidents' Reports," *The Guidon - A Political Review*, Vol. 5 No. 3, February 1931, p. 8.

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who are proud of the part that they themselves had in the recent campaign in helping to restore the government of this country to the safe keeping of the Republican party.

It is hoped that this Club will be instrumental in promoting the future usefulness of the party and in shaping in some degree its policies and ideals.

In the speech, she struck a note that would be repeated often in her work at the WNRC:

An important work of the Club will be the political education of its members. There will be every opportunity provided through talks by prominent people and eminent authorities, through study classes, debates and discussions for members to form intelligent opinions on the great questions of the day, so that they may act with deliberate judgment on matters which affect the welfare both of the nation and of the individual. The nation needs as never before an intelligent electorate.

In these times of unrest and dangerous propaganda we shall inculcate and teach an undeviating adherence to the Constitution of the United States. We shall encourage its study and an appreciation of its true value and shall guard with unceasing vigilance the principles of liberty which it contains.

We believe that the Republican party is the party which has upheld and aims to uphold the Constitution of the United States. We believe that as members of that party working loyally to upbuild both its organization and its ideals, we can be of the best service to our country which is built on that Constitution.

To this end we dedicate ourselves and the Women's National Republican Club to the services of the Nation, to the safeguarding of the Constitution on which the Nation rests, and to the Republican party, the servant of both.<sup>9</sup>

Other founders and officers of the WNRC included Pauline Sabin, Alice Chittenden, Grace Vanamee, and Florence Shloss Gugenheim.

The opening of the club was welcomed by major Republican figures:

Starting with the approval of all the party leaders, the Women's National Republican Club opened its new clubhouse at 38 West Thirty-ninth Street yesterday. Messages were received from or speeches were made by a number of leading Republicans, emphasizing the importance of party organization. Governor Nathan L. Miller sent a telegram referring to his Albany speech in which he characterized the League of Women Voters as a menace and said he was glad to endorse the formation of a club the members of which put away the suggestion of forming a woman's party.... Mrs. Miller, wife of the Governor, is one of the founders of the club, and Mrs. Warren G. Harding, wife of the President-elect, has accepted

<sup>9</sup> "Alumnae Notes," Wellesley Alumnae Quarterly (Wellesley College Alumnae Association), Vol. V No. 3, April 1921, p. 203.

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election to honorary membership. The club, which already has more than 500 members from fifteen different States, is the first women's political organization of the kind in the country....

"It will be a long time, if ever, before we get away from the two-party system," said Herbert Hoover in a speech at the evening meeting. "It is fitting that the women should ally themselves to a party as a duty of good citizenship." Mrs. Harding wrote:

"I am proud to have been invited to honorary membership in your organization, which I am very sure is going to be a useful and effective instrumentality for the propagation of the best ideals of citizenship. I cannot help feeling that the women citizens are going to be able to exercise a large and useful influence through affiliation with and interest in the work of establishing party organization."<sup>10</sup>

**The first WNRC Buildings**

The WNRC originally opened in 1921 at 38 West 39<sup>th</sup> Street, in what Pauline Sabin, who was charged with finding a location for the club, described as "a little loft... over a wholesale cloak and suit manufacturing concern...."<sup>11</sup> According to a contemporary description:

The club has the top two floors of the building, and the roof to be used as a lounge in the summer time. On the one floor is the general room, and the lunch room and kitchen. There will be cafeteria service, so that busy women can conserve their time. The floor above is given up entirely to the big meeting room, where there will be about 300 chairs.<sup>12</sup>

This first space was intended to be temporary. As Mrs. Livermore explained in her speech at the Club's opening:

In forming the Club it is rather remarkable that the membership has grown so large that the Club House is outgrown before it is opened. These quarters, however, are only temporary while the Club is maturing plans for obtaining a real Club House of its own.<sup>13</sup>

And indeed, as Mrs. Sabin recollected:

After a year or so, our membership equaled our enthusiasm and it was necessary for us to move... We wanted something in approximately the same locality but this time something to be our very own.... We moved into the new Clubhouse on February 11th, 1924, with approximately 1600 members, and within two years our membership had increased to 3,000.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Republican Heads Back Women's Club," *New York Times*, February 18, 1921.

<sup>11</sup> Pauline Morton Sabin, "Presidents' reports," *The Guidon - A Political Review* (the WNRC newsletter), Vol. 5, No. 3, February 1931, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> "Alumnae Notes," *Wellesley Alumnae Quarterly* (Wellesley College Alumnae Association), Volume 5, No. 3, April 1921, p.203.

<sup>13</sup> "Alumnae Notes," *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Sabin, *op. cit.*

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The club acquired its new home, two brownstones at Nos. 6 and 8 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street in Murray Hill, in May 1923 and engaged the architectural firm of Cross & Cross to convert the buildings for the club's use. The new location, according to the *Times*, called...

...attention to the tendency to accept that district as the centre of club life in New York City. In the neighborhood are the Cosmopolitan, Delta Phi, Delta Epsilon, National Republican, Democratic National, Amherst, Brown University, Woman's City Club of New York, Bryn Mawr College, Princeton, Men's Pan Hellenic, Cornell, Union League, Williams College, National Navy, Phi Kappa Sigma, Beta Theta Pi, Soldiers and Sailors and the New York Young Republican Clubs.<sup>15</sup>

Besides the general tenor of the neighborhood, the "accessibility of the club house to the Pennsylvania and Grand Central stations was an important consideration in the purchase of the property."<sup>16</sup>

As described in the *Times*:

The club house is five stories in height. There are two stores on the street. The east store will be rented for campaign purposes. The other will be rented for commercial use. An auditorium is on the west side of the second floor and occupies the entire normal floor. The rear of this room can be shut off and formed into a smaller room with folding doors. The whole auditorium will seat about 400. The smaller room can be rented if desired. It has a separate entrance at 6 East Thirty-seventh Street, the main club entrance being at 8 East Thirty-seventh Street. A short flight of stairs leads to the auditorium. There is ample space for ticket taking, as well as coat rooms and dressing rooms at the rear of the entrance hall. It has been planned in such a way that it can be rented to any one desiring to use it and can be used for a great variety of purposes. The auditorium is connected by a door with one of the dining rooms so that in renting it this dining room may also be used if desired. On the east side of the second floor opposite the auditorium are two club restaurants. The kitchen is in the rear of the east store, on the ground floor. Two large lounge rooms are on the third floor at the rear. In the front is a large library. The two top floors are reserved for bedrooms for club members and their guests. The building has a roof which will be available for Summer use. The exterior of the club house is painted green. All through the house are rooms with inlaid floors which it has been possible to preserve and the woodwork of the house has been simple in design, and that also has been preserved. The two original brownstone front buildings were exactly alike and on the same level. They have been built together into one building, with an elevator in the centre which reaches all floors.<sup>17</sup>

Before long, the club had furnished the new building with what in 1930 the *Times* described as "one of the finest collections of early furniture in the country."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> "Women's National Republican Club to Open Its New Home, Feb. 11," *New York Times*, February 3, 1924, p. RE2.

<sup>16</sup> "New Home for the Women's National Republican Club," *New York Times*, May 13, 1923, p. RE 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> "Republican Women to Celebrate," *New York Times*, December 28, 1930, p. E5.

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Mrs. Sabin, on the tenth anniversary of the club's founding, reminisced about the early days, but then spoke about the purpose of the club, beyond its merely social function:

Those early days in the loft were happy ones and many of us who are here today will never forget them.... Your president asked me to speak for a few minutes today on the early history of the Clubhouse. I have tried to tell you a little of its past, but I cannot let its 10th birthday go by merely speaking of rents, furniture, bricks and mortar, because behind all of this the women who started the Club had a certain ideal as their goal.

It was our intention to be forcibly of service to the Republican Party and not as Theodore Roosevelt has said, "To mean well feebly." Our Republicanism was firm and will ever remain so long as our Party does not ask us to violate our conscience or what we believe to be for the best interests of our country. But how can the leaders of a Party interpret the sentiment of their followers, if their followers merely apathetically acquiesce instead of forcefully expressing their opinion on controversial questions?

I sincerely believe that the best way the Women's National Republican Club can be of service to the Republican Party is by becoming articulate, and, informing our Party Leaders as to what we believe is for the best interests of the Party, and our country, and that in that way we can render far greater service than by remaining silent.

I beg of you to be leaders, not merely followers.<sup>19</sup>

Within a decade, the club outgrew its new quarters. As Maude Wetmore, a former president who became the chief force behind acquiring a new building, explained in a report in 1931:

Our Club has absolutely outgrown its present premises. Economically, our old building is unsatisfactory for it is not revenue-producing. The new building will have more bed rooms, each with its own bath room, private dining rooms, card rooms, lounge, assembly room, etc.<sup>20</sup>

But Ms. Wetmore identified more than just practical concerns:

...I am interested not only bricks and mortar. This Club House is to be a symbol of a new movement among Republican women nationally. We can be of great help to our Party, but we must be more recognized than we have been in the past. I am not speaking of our national Club, but of Republican women as a whole throughout the country. We have not been sufficiently recognized and what we have said has not always been heard. We have a great contribution to make and I know that as organization

<sup>19</sup> "Presidents' Reports; Pauline Morton Sabin," *The Guidon - A Political Review*, Vol. 5 No. 3, February 1931, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Maude K. Wetmore, "Presidents' Reports," *The Guidon - A Political Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3, February 1931, p. 8.

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Republicans, the time will come when that contribution will be of great value and we will want to share in the victory of future elections.<sup>21</sup>

The effort would require a great deal of support, both financial and logistical:

This Club House can be built only if every member who recognizes the importance of having such a new club house, will be willing to assume the individual responsibility towards it. By that I mean, time and money. My intention is to call a meeting of the members to discuss a plan, the first week in April, but not in the assembly room of our present Club House, for only 250 people can attend such a meeting there, and to make the Club House I have in mind successful, it will require at least a thousand people to join with me in giving their support and advice so that I will have to hire an adequate room in one of the hotels. I have already suggested plans which will be shown on a screen, so that when the time comes if you are interested in a new Club House, you must attend, for it absolutely depends upon the outcome of that meeting whether a new Club House will come into being or not.<sup>22</sup>

By October of that year, the sale of bonds to pay for the new building had begun. The financial squeeze of the Depression slowed the pace of fundraising, but it also offered a powerful incentive to succeed, and to help the Republican party maintain control of the White House in the coming election of 1932 (in which, however, Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt ultimately defeated Republican President Herbert Hoover). In October 1931, Ms. Wetmore wrote:

To the members who of necessity use the Club House less than others, I would like to stress the point that the erection of this Club House is an answer in itself to many of the Democratic activities which we read of, all preparing for the election of 1932. The Republican Administration in Washington is working - is straining every nerve to re-establish normal conditions in this country. It is looking to the members of the Republican party to do all they can to bring this condition about. As Republican women we recognize the tremendous pressure which the unemployment situation is bringing to bear upon all citizens of the United States, but we do feel that at times sacrifices must be made for a cause in which we believe, and our cause is the Republican party.

We need the help of every member to erect this Club House, however small that help may be. It is important that we should occupy the new Club House by the first of October, 1932, so that the activities of the Club in the Presidential Election may be directed from the new headquarters.<sup>23</sup>

Though the Depression posed obstacles to constructing a new building, it also offered "selling points" for the proposal. On the one hand, "If the Club House can be built now, it will give work to scores of men, thus helping the unemployment situation," while on the other hand,

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> "The New Club House," *The Guidon - A Political Review*, Vol. 6 No. 1, October 1931, p. 20.



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We are missing a big opportunity if we do not build at this time, for on a conservative basis, it has been estimated that when times become normal again the same house and the same land would cost at least a couple of hundred thousand dollars more.

The sale of bonds was also promoted on several counts:

Every member who buys a bond will have a sense of personal ownership in the new Club House.... The bonds are a five per cent investment, which is an inducement. Ever since we moved into the present club house, eight years ago, we have never failed to pay the interest on bonds issued at that time. At this time, when the savings banks of the Country have more money on deposit than they can use, and the rate of interest on savings accounts is so low, this investment should appeal to many subscribers.<sup>24</sup>

In announcing plans for the new building, Ms. Wetmore declared:

Our expansion is based on a firm belief in the future of the country and on the renewed political activity of women the country over.... The political interest of women is reawakening. The building of a club at such a time and the completion of our goal of the sale of \$300,000 worth of bonds for financing are indicative of the reality of this interest.<sup>25</sup>

In November 1931, Mrs. Livermore announced that \$181,000 of a projected \$300,000 bond issue had been raised, enabling the WNRC to acquire a piece of property on West 51<sup>st</sup> Street, just west of Fifth Avenue, across from the site of the newly planned Rockefeller Center. As reported in the *Times*:

Mrs. Arthur L. Livermore, president of the organization, said yesterday that the sum subscribed was sufficient to warrant the committee in charge to proceed with the building plans. The new clubhouse will be erected at 5 West Fifty-first Street. Mrs. Livermore's announcement was made at a meeting in the Waldorf-Astoria. Preceding the meeting Mrs. Daniel Guggenheim had given a luncheon in the hotel for the board of governors and 150 founders of the club. The new clubhouse will contain a large assembly room, lounges, a library, a private dining room and thirty bedrooms, each with a private bath. The architect is Frederic R. King.....<sup>26</sup>

In March 1932, Frederic R. King and Theodore E. Blake, architects, filed plans for the new club house.

**Frederic Rhineland King, Wyeth & King, and Theodore E. Blake**

Frederic Rhineland King (1887-1972), born in New York City, studied architecture at Columbia University from 1908 to 1911 and then attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris from 1912 to 1914. On returning to New York he worked as a draftsman at the firm of McKim, Mead & White from 1914 to 1917 then went to France as

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> "Headquarters Planned by Republican Women," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 4, 1933, p.2.

<sup>26</sup> "Republican Women are Ready to Build," *New York Times*, November 11, 1931, p. 24.

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a member of the American Red Cross Commission (while apparently also working with "Army Intelligence"). Returning again to New York he joined the office of Carrere & Hastings, before starting an independent practice in 1920.<sup>27</sup>

Marion Sims Wyeth (d.1982), also New York-born, studied at Princeton and then at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1910-14.<sup>28</sup> He worked briefly in the office of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and then of Carrere & Hastings, in 1916-17, where he likely met King. The two architects worked together from 1920, finally forming the partnership of Wyeth & King in 1932. Wyeth later became known for his work in Palm Beach, Florida.

Theodore E. Blake (d.1949) studied at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris 1892-85, before joining the office of Carrere & Hastings as a draftsman, where he remained until 1927; he too likely met Frederic Rhineland King there. According to the *New York Times*:

Mr. Blake was closely associated with the late Thomas Hastings in the preparation of the plans for the New York Public Library at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue; and during the same period he also had much to do with the designing of the House and Senate Office Buildings in Washington. His works during the last twenty years include the Mount Hope Bridge, Providence, R.I.; the Second Church of Christ, Scientist, New York; the Harbeck Chapel in Woodlawn Cemetery and the Rosemary School buildings in Greenwich.<sup>29</sup>

Though born in New York, Frederic Rhineland King was descended from a family socially prominent in both New York and Newport, Rhode Island (he was also a cousin of Edith Wharton).<sup>30</sup> According to his *New York Times* obituary:

Mr. King was a son of LeRoy King and the former Ledyard Rhineland of New York and Newport, R.I., and a direct descendant of Peter Stuyvesant. He prepared at St. George's School in Newport, of which he was later a trustee.... Mr. King, as an architect trained in the classical tradition, was a consulting architect for public buildings in Washington, the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, here, the Seaman's Church Institute in Newport, and parish buildings of Trinity Episcopal Church there.<sup>31</sup>

Other Newport commissions included a garden house (c.1920) for Chateau-Sur-Mer, on Bellevue Avenue – Newport's grand avenue of enormous "cottages" – built for Edith Wetmore. According to historians William Jordy and Christopher Monkhouse:

<sup>27</sup> Information taken from King's application to be a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

<sup>28</sup> "Marion S. Wyeth, Architect," *New York Times*, February 10, 1982, p. B6.

<sup>29</sup> "Theodore E. Blake, An Architect, 79," *New York Times*, July 4, 1949, p.13.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Gardner, "Linking up with Wharton," *Wall Street Journal*, May 17, 2012 p. A.18, citing material in an exhibition about Wharton at the New York Society Library.

<sup>31</sup> "Frederic King, 84, Architect, Is Dead - Designed Episcopal Church of the Epiphany Here," *New York Times*, March 22, 1972, p. 50.

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King was a lifelong friend of the Wetmore family, and Miss Edith Wetmore consulted him on many matters of style and taste. She chose him as the architect of the Seaman's Church Institute building (1930) on Market Square, Newport; he also built a weekend house for her at Hyde Park, New York.

The Seaman's Church Institute was a gift from Edith Wetmore and her sister Maude - daughters of Rhode Island Senator George Peabody Wetmore - in memory of their parents.<sup>32</sup> The Wetmore sisters were also

... leaders in the effort to restore and preserve the Old Colony House at Newport.... Miss Wetmore announced this week that the house, which was built in 1789, will be completely restored. All the governors of Rhode Island were inaugurated in this house until 1900... Mr. Frederic Rhineland King has donated his services as architect.<sup>33</sup>

And Jordy and Monkhouse note that "...Wetmore was fond enough of King's architectural rendering to use it for a Christmas card."<sup>34</sup>

King's other commissions included private residences, as well as, according to the *Times*:

...a wing for the Phillips Collection in Washington; an addition to Barnard Hall at Barnard College, of which he was a trustee for many years, and drew plans for restoring the Richmondtown county seat on Staten Island.<sup>35</sup>

King's connection with Maude Wetmore must have recommended him for the commission for the WNRC, as Maude Wetmore was Chairman of the club's building committee. But likely so did his interest in historic American architecture. Besides his involvement in the restoration of Richmondtown, he advocated for historic preservation long before it became a popular cause in New York City. In a letter to the *New York Times* in 1948, he wrote:

New York City retains so very few handsome architectural reminders of its past that the mere suggestion of razing the beautiful houses on the north side of Washington Square should bring a storm of protest from artists, architects and citizens alike. These buildings should be preserved from destruction, and the facades kept intact. Trustees of the near-by charitable and educational institutions have an obligation to the community to preserve historic monuments and should be responsive to the interests of the whole

<sup>32</sup> "Seamen's Church Institute, Newport, Rhode Island," *The Spirit of missions* (Episcopal Church. Board of Missions, Episcopal Church. Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society), Vol. 94, 1929: "One chief aim was to make it look hospitable, and the success attained is shown in a sailor's remark on viewing the plans: 'Boy, that is a home!'"

<sup>33</sup> "Old Colony House Will Be Restored," *Washington Post*, September 18, 1931, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> William H. Jordy, Christopher P. Monkhouse, *Buildings on Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings, 1825-1945* (David Winton Bell Gallery, 1982), p. 106. They attribute the information on King to Paul L. Veeder, II, "The Outbuildings and Grounds of Chateau-sur-Mer," Preservation Society of Newport County.

<sup>35</sup> "Frederic King, 84...", *op. cit.*

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people of the city, as well as to the interests of the particular group whom they serve. When they are compelled to expand they should surely improve and develop blighted areas to the east and south of the square rather than destroy this beautiful remnant of the nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

King's traditional architectural taste – especially in the early 1930s, during the ascendance of various forms of modernism – matched the interest in early American associations of the leaders of the WNRC.

The Women's National Republican Club at 3 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street

*The Site.*

In moving to West 51<sup>st</sup> Street, the WNRC left Murray Hill, a residential enclave known for its many clubs, for the heart of Midtown. Maude Wetmore summarized the advantages of the location:

The location... is ideal. Within a stone's throw of the theatre district, it is also in the heart of the shopping center. The subway station is only a block and a half away, and the Fifth Avenue buses practically pass our door.<sup>37</sup>

She also observed:

It is in a west-bound street, so that we shall be no further from the Pennsylvania Station than we are now.... We shall be practically the only women's club in that neighborhood.<sup>38</sup>

The *Times* noted:

Another fact which may be of future benefit to the club is that it is opposite the Rockefeller Center. No building work, however, is going on in the area directly opposite the club site.<sup>39</sup>

The new building...

...will occupy the fifty-foot plot at 3-5 West Fifty-first Street, adjoining the residence of General Cornelius Vanderbilt on the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue. An option has been taken on the property, which is owned by the Vanderbilt interests, and the new home is being financed by a bond issue aggregating \$300,000. It is proposed to erect on the site... a seven-story clubhouse which has been designed by the architect, Frederic R. King. The present club property at 6-8 East Thirty-seventh Street

<sup>36</sup> Frederic Rhinelander King, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, March 28, 1949.

<sup>37</sup> *The Guidon – A Political Review*, Vol. 7 No. 3, February 1933 p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> "Women's Republican Club to Have New Clubhouse," *The New York Sun*, December 3, 1931.

<sup>39</sup> "Old Carnegie Home Being Demolished," *New York Times*, March 5, 1933 p. RE1.

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will then be sold... The new home will contain an assembly room to accommodate nearly 300 persons and several sleeping rooms and private dining rooms.<sup>40</sup>

The plot acquired by the WNRC had formerly been a large 19<sup>th</sup> century residence associated, though briefly, with Andrew Carnegie:

...the residence now being demolished was for five years the city home of Andrew Carnegie. It was while a resident of the house that he conceived the idea of erecting his well-known home on upper Fifth Avenue.... The house was built about 1880... Mr. Carnegie bought the property early in 1887...from Collis P. Huntington. ...After Andrew Carnegie moved far uptown he sold the Fifty-first Street dwelling to William P. Clyde, head of the Clyde Steamship Line, and Mr. Clyde, with other members of his family, lived there for several years. It was purchased from the Clyde estate about a year ago by the Women's National Republican Club.<sup>41</sup>

*The style*

By the early 1930s, modernism in its various forms had become dominant in New York and nationally. As Frederic Rhinelander King was designing the new WNRC building, the brand new Chrysler and Empire State buildings had just created an Art Deco skyline for Midtown, and they would shortly be joined by the RCA tower at Rockefeller Center – just a block south of the new club building. But older streams of design still persisted. Cass Gilbert – among the nation's most prominent architects – designed a new home for the New York County Lawyers' Association at 14 Vesey Street (built 1928-30; listed on the National Register, 90NR00896) in a neo-Georgian manner. Dwight James Baum designed a Colonial Revival post office for Flushing (built 1932-34; listed on the National Register, 90NR01614). For the County Lawyers' Association, the neo-Georgian style suggested a connection with a neighboring famous Colonial-era church – as the Association noted, their new home bore a "certain relation to the architecture of Old Saint Paul's Church" directly across Vesey Street. For government buildings like the Post Office, however, the style suggested a connection with the nation's founding, and that was also the association the style had for the WNRC, an association mirrored by the club's collection of early American furnishings.

The contrast between the new club building and the buildings of Rockefeller Center rising across the street was noted by the *Times*:

The clubhouse...faces the skyscrapers of Rockefeller Center. But in architecture and decorative effects it will offer a sharp contrast to this latter group of buildings.

The Colonial atmosphere will be carried out, down to the smallest detail of the interior furnishings. Many valuable Colonial antiques belonging to the club, and now in the Thirty-seventh Street headquarters, will be moved shortly to the new building.

<sup>40</sup> "Women's Republic Club Selects Site in W.51st Street," *New York Times*, June 11, 1931, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> "Old Carnegie Home Being Demolished," *New York Times*, March 5, 1933 p. RE1.

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The Colonial furnishings – like the neo-Georgian style of the building itself – were meant to suggest “early American history.”<sup>42</sup>

The *Brooklyn Eagle* described the furnishings at greater length:

Victorian furniture from a Knickerbocker grandmother's attic, plus furnishings already in use at their old clubhouse, plus other recently collected Colonial antiques, make a friendly new home for the Women's National Republican Club at 3 W. 51<sup>st</sup> St., Manhattan. The club moved in a few days ago after a building record of a year and a moving record of just one week.

The Victorian furniture – mellow mahogany pieces now upholstered in gold moire – is the gift of Miss Maude K. Wetmore, a past president and head of the building committee.... Among their other reasons for pride in their achievement, the club members list high the eagles that decorate several of the rooms. In the assembly room is a fine antique specimen, taken from an old fireplace in Bristol, R.I. Another, from a sailing ship, hangs over the fireplace in one of the committee rooms. The main dining room, papered with a reproduction of a quaint paper showing the adventures of Red Riding Hood, has leather-covered benches round the walls, increasing the seating capacity and the coziness of the room in one gesture....

The fine art of combining Colonial antiques and contemporary furniture is exhibited in the new clubhouse.... Three-quarters of the furnishings are authentic antiques, yet the modern rooms really belong. The solarium on the roof-top is frankly – and gayly – modern, the color scheme of red, white and blue, with a touch of relief in black. Blue is the huge round mirror that hangs at one end of the room, reflecting the wicker furniture – white banded in blue and scarlet, black with white leather cushions.<sup>43</sup>

*The building*

King and Blake designed a nine-story club house with a spare neo-Georgian exterior and “Colonial”-inspired interiors. The new building included many of the same features as the old club house – meeting rooms, lounges, kitchen and dining rooms, library, bedrooms, and an outside roof area for use in good weather – but on a much larger scale.

<sup>42</sup> “A National Club for Republican Women,” *Republican Woman*, October 1927, RWP scrapbook, 1925-27; cited by Catherine E. Rymph in *Republican Women: Feminism And Conservatism from Suffrage Through the Rise of the New Right* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 47 (footnote 23).

<sup>43</sup> “Fine Antiques Fill Nine-Story House With Rare View,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 3, 1934, p. 10.

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In March 1934, the *Times* described the new building in some detail:

Workmen are busy putting the finishing touches on the new nine-story clubhouse of the Women's National Republican Club at 3 West Fifty-first Street, and the members are preparing to enter their new home late this month.

The new building, erected from plans by Frederic R. King, architect, on the site of the house where Andrew Carnegie once lived, will contain much more space for political, social and educational facilities than has been available in the remodeled houses at 6-8 East Thirty-seventh Street, where the organization has been located for several years....

A Vaulted Vestibule

Members now are able to get an idea of the ample facilities provided in the new edifice. The main entrance hall, flanked by two shops, leads to a vaulted vestibule with terrazzo floor in black and white. Dressing rooms and offices also are located on this floor.

Opposite the elevators is a graceful marble stairway leading to the second-floor assembly hall, to be called the George Washington room, which runs the entire width of the building and has a seventeen-foot ceiling. This room will seat 250 persons, and overflow rooms with folding doors provide additional seating space.

The dining room on the third floor is of the same size and height. Above this is the lounge, almost fifty feet deep, with antique black and gold mantelpieces at each end. The dining rooms, which may be converted to recreational uses, have a special entrance from the elevators in the shape of a half-octagon, with terrazzo flooring. From this hall another marble stair leads to the lounge floor and library, which has been named the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Library. The collection of books is being supplemented steadily by new historical and biographical material.

Thirty Bedrooms Provided

The fifth floor is given over to executive offices, a small committee room, dressing rooms and employees' quarters. The sixth, seventh and eighth floors are identical in layout, providing thirty bedrooms, each with a bath. The furnishings will be in residential style, with Colonial four-poster beds and dressing tables of light maple.

The solarium on the ninth floor is the only space which will not follow the Colonial style. Here is a wide-checked floor and windows across the entire front opening into a flagged slate terrace.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> "New Home for Republican Women," *New York Times*, March 4, 1934, p. RE1.

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Maude Wetmore described what she considered particularly important social aspects of the building:

Every bedroom, and there will be thirty of them, will have its own private bathroom and will be comfortably furnished. We rather pride ourselves on the atmosphere of our present club house, which we intend to take with us. The lounges and the library will be delightful rooms with open fireplaces. Two of our great needs have been provided for. I refer to the private dining rooms and card rooms. Here members will be able to entertain their friends amid charming surroundings. To ensure quick service, serving pantries have been provided for on both these floors. For those members whose fate it is to spend a good part of the summer in town, the terrace on the roof will be a real delight. Part of this terrace will be enclosed in winter and tea can be served there in the afternoons.<sup>45</sup>

She was particularly proud of the Coolidge Library:

I know our members will be interested to learn that the library has been set aside as a memorial to Calvin Coolidge. As President of the United States, Mr. Coolidge opened our present club house, and it is but fitting that the man who gave his whole life to the service of his country should be gratefully remembered by the members of this club. It seems to me that we all want to take part in this memorial, no matter how modest our offering may be, as a token of our appreciation of the ideals he believed in and so faithfully observed.<sup>46</sup>

The grand opening of the new building was described at length in *The Guidon*, the WNRC newsletter. Included were two articles by Republican men, Charles D. Hilles of the Republican National Committee and James R. Sheffield.

Hilles noted:

As I reflect upon your modest beginnings, upon the preliminary discussions as to the proper chart for your course, and upon the progress you have made since then, I am glad that I was one of those whom you consulted when the club was without form and void. It required faith and vision and resolution to launch the undertaking, and wisdom and patience authoritatively to direct its affairs. You who have been steadily at the helm may justly feel proud. Your Club and our party are deeply indebted to Mrs. Arthur Livermore, Mrs. Charles H. Sabin, and their associates for their sagacious foresight in founding the Club upon a basis so broad and enduring.

One of the preliminary problems related to the range of action and the possible sphere of influence. It was a question whether you would restrict membership to the city, or to the city and state, or would extend it to the nation. The decision to nationalize the scope was an important one in view of the domicile being in the greater city where local political questions have ceased to be matters of partisan

<sup>45</sup> Maude K. Wetmore, Chairman, Building Committee, *The Guidon - A Political Review*, Vol. 7 No. 3, February 1933, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



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concern, since city elections are held in "off years" to furnish an escape from the embarrassing fixity of party emblems, and where state issues are almost totally eclipsed by national issues. You owe continuity of purpose to a consistent planned policy and one of the important planks in your platform, speaking colloquially, was that you would operate upon a national plane....

Your membership has had a continuous growth even when the whole world was in the valley of depression. The Club House would not have been built if it had not been for the conquering spirit of a few of your officers and, in particular of Miss Maude Wetmore and Mrs. Daniel Guggenheim.... In the meantime, the building which will be erected at No. 3 West 51st Street will attest the business judgment of a company of capable women who were undismayed by a combined national party debacle and universal economic crisis. I express to you the admiration of the Republican National Committee. We felicitate you and assure you of our appreciation of your stimulating example.<sup>47</sup>

Sheffield wrote:

The building of a beautiful and permanent home for the Women's National Republican Club is an event of nationwide importance. In dignity of design and convenience of location, it is well suited to the work of the loyal and patriotic women who compose the membership of this only national [sic] Republican Women's Club....

It will be a fitting home as well as workshop for the activities, social and political, of a great Club. It will mean much in the guidance and development of the Party here and throughout the country. It deserves the support of all Republican women who love their country, and feel, in every crisis, that people eventually turn to their Party, whether in or out of power, to help save the Republic.

We are face to face with grave questions affecting the foundations upon which this Government rests. Men and women may agree or disagree with the extraordinary measures taken by the National Administration to meet an emergency. But the need of intelligent criticism by the Party now out of power is paramount. The safety of our Institutions and the danger to the safeguards of the Federal Constitution should arouse women to a sense of their obligation to help determine these questions in the interest of sound and sane Government and the future safety and prosperity of the nation.

The new building will offer a forum for discussion amid surroundings of the finest character not to be found elsewhere in any political club in America. Its annual luncheon is one of the most largely attended political events of its kind during the year. Here gather a great representative group from many States of the Union to hear addresses by leading Republican men and women of the Nation. Surely such a Club with its wonderful history and fine traditions is worthy of the new home which Miss Wetmore and her associates have planned and caused to be built.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Charles D. Hilles, "The Women's National Republican Club," *The Guidon - A Political Review*, Vol. 8 No. 3, February 1934, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> James R. Sheffield, "The Women's National Republican Club," *The Guidon - A Political Review*, Vol. 8 No. 3, February 1934, p.

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Later history

The women of the WNRC considered the new club house to be important well beyond its physical amenities. When the project was first announced by Maude Wetmore, in 1933, she was quoted in the press:

Our expansion is based on a firm belief in the future of the country and on the renewed political activity of women the country over.... The political interest of women is reawakening. The building of a club at such a time and the completion of our goal of the sale of \$300,000 worth of bonds for financing are indicative of the reality of this interest.<sup>49</sup>

An opening reception was held on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1934. As covered in the press:

Republican Women in New Clubhouse...

Colonial-Type Building Has a Memorial to Coolidge - Also a Solarium

The handsomely designed and tastefully furnished new clubhouse of the Women's National Republican Club at 3 West Fifty-first Street was formally opened last night at a reception attended by several thousand persons. The board of governors, headed by Mrs. George A. Wyeth, president, and Miss Maude K. Wetmore, chairman of the building committee, received in the George Washington assembly room, which was decorated with flags of the forty-four States in which the club has members.

Mrs. Wyeth, who made the only speech, was enthusiastically applauded when she said:  
"The opening of the club marks the rebirth of the Republican party. We've been through hard times and there are hard times ahead, but, just as we built this home, we will rebuild the party and win out in the end."<sup>50</sup>

The WNRC became the site of much Republican political activity, including meetings and presentations, and educational programs, notably a "School for Politics" begun by Mrs. Livermore:

With their inspiring home as a background, the club will expand its program of teaching politics, begun by the first president, Mrs. Arthur L. Livermore. Meetings of the school of politics will be held weekly in the assembly room - named for George Washington - and a weekly current events class will be held.<sup>51</sup>

Mrs. Livermore wrote in 1932 about the responsibilities of women Republicans during the crisis of the Depression and the upcoming election:

<sup>49</sup> "Headquarters Planned by Republican Women," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 4, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> "Republican Women in New Clubhouse," *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> "Fine Antiques Fill Nine-Story House With Rare View," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 3, 1934, p. 10.

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The present situation is not unlike a war emergency.... Every woman's business today is to know and study the conditions in her city, her State and her group, how the State and national governments have affected and will affect each household, each breadwinner and each citizen. Our taxes, are they too large? Our expenditures, are they justified? Our great industries, are they on a sound basis, helped or injured by our laws? Our budget, employment, prohibition, our farmers, banks, armaments, tariffs, public utilities, what of them?

...There is no use in any woman thinking she can shirk her duties as an American citizen in this year of decision, 1932. For each decision in Congress or State comes right back to her own home and knits itself into her personal welfare for good will. Because of the Presidential election of 1932, so vital in world and national history and so vital to ourselves, our organization of the Women's National Republican Club is preparing for even more serious study, more lecture courses, a continuous school of politics, more careful weighing on all sides of all public questions for on the intelligent and thoughtful citizen rests a greater, graver responsibility than ever before. The unthinking, the ignorant, the prejudiced, the selfish and the corrupt will all be active; all the more reason therefore that the conscientious and the more intelligent do not slack in their jobs of self-government.<sup>52</sup>

In 1932, the Yonkers *Herald Statesman* could observe:

Mrs. Livermore's organization of the Women's National Republican Club and the effectiveness of the work of this club has done much in educating women to concentrate and use their votes to a definite end, and is a monument to her understanding as well as her ability as an organizer.... One of the developments in its services which she regards as her own outstanding contribution to its activities and which has been copied in organizations of republican women in other cities, is the School of Politics which, as its name implies, is a course of instruction in political issues and in the technique of politics given annually by outstanding Republican leaders. Another expansion took place last year in the organization of a committee known as the Young Republican Women's Committee whose objective is to create a rallying center for younger women voters. Mrs. Livermore's niece, Mrs. Pierrepont M. Hamilton, is chairman.<sup>53</sup>

The club continued its activities during the Depression, World War II, and into the post-War period. During the 1970s, the club faced financial difficulties, as did many clubs in the city in those years. In 1976, the WNRC leased the building's fifth floor to the Lambs Theatre Club, which had given up its own neo-Georgian building on West 44<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>54</sup> The Lambs Club continues to be a tenant in the building.

Today the WNRC continues to occupy its clubhouse, and to pursue its mission. It continues to maintain its 30 guest rooms, ballroom, solarium, library and other facilities, and remains an active player in Republican politics. It continues to maintain what is now called the Henrietta Wells Livermore School of Politics. The WNRC club

<sup>52</sup> Henrietta W. Livermore, "A Rallying Call," *The Guidon - A Political Review*, Vol. 6 No. 3, February 1932, p.7.

<sup>53</sup> "Eastern Republican Women Look to Yonkers..." *op. cit.*

<sup>54</sup> Lewis Hardee, *The Lambs Theatre Club* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2006), p. 233.

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house at 3 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street stands as a handsome neo-Georgian clubhouse among the skyscrapers of Rockefeller Center, and a monument to the major strides in politics made by the women led by Henrietta Wells Livermore.

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Boundary Description

The Women's National Republican Club is located at 3 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street in Manhattan, New York State, New York County. The building consumes a rectilinear lot that is less than one acre. The building faces south towards Rockefeller Center.

Boundary Justification

The Club is located on the historic lands associated with its 1932 – 1934 period of construction.

**Women's National Republican Club****New York County, New York**

Name of Property

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property Less than one acre**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 1 8 5 8 6 3 2 0 4 5 1 2 5 7 7  
Zone Easting Northing3 1 8              
Zone Easting Northing2 1 8            4 1 8            **Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Anthony Robins (Contact – Daniel McEneny, NYSHPO)organization \_\_\_\_\_ date October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012street & number 50 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_city or town New York state NY zip code 10023**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's locationA **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)name National Women's Republican Club (contact: Catherine Maxaner, historian)street & number 3 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_city or town Manhattan state NY zip code 10020**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)**Estimated Burden Statement:** public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20



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Additional Information

**Photo List: Women's National Republican Club**

Unless otherwise noted, all photos by Anthony W. Robins  
September 2012

1. Women's National Republican Club (WNRC), 3 East 51<sup>st</sup> Street, first two stories, looking northwest. Photo: WNRC.
2. Main façade, looking northwest. Photo: WNRC.
3. Main façade, detail of upper stories. Photo: WNRC.
4. Main façade, entrance. Photo: WNRC.
5. Lobby and grand staircase.
6. Second floor: Grand Ballroom, seen from the second floor mezzanine balcony.
7. Second floor mezzanine: Formal dining area, with view into Bar.
8. Third floor: Grand Salon, fireplace
9. Fourth floor: Elevator foyer; steps on the left lead to the Lincoln Room (straight ahead) and the Coolidge Library (top left)
10. Fourth floor: Pratt Lounge
11. Fourth floor: Coolidge Library
12. Fourth floor: Lincoln Room
13. Ninth floor: Solarium
14. Ninth floor: Solarium terrace (facing onto East 51<sup>st</sup> Street)

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Postcard c.1933

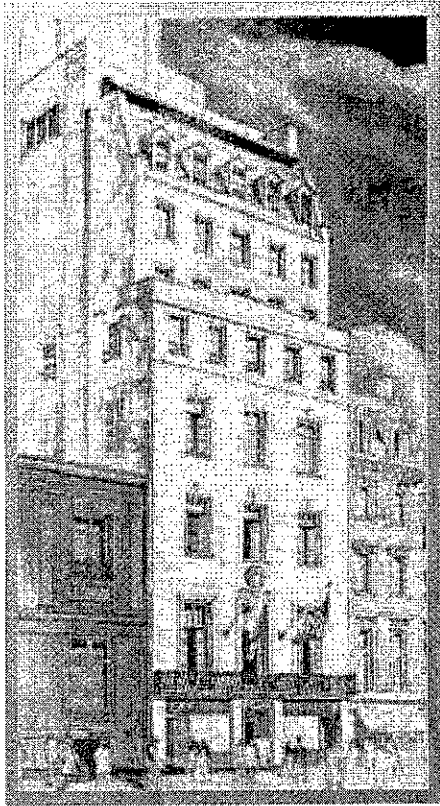
<http://www.usgwarchives.org/ny/newyork/postcards/wnrc.jpg>

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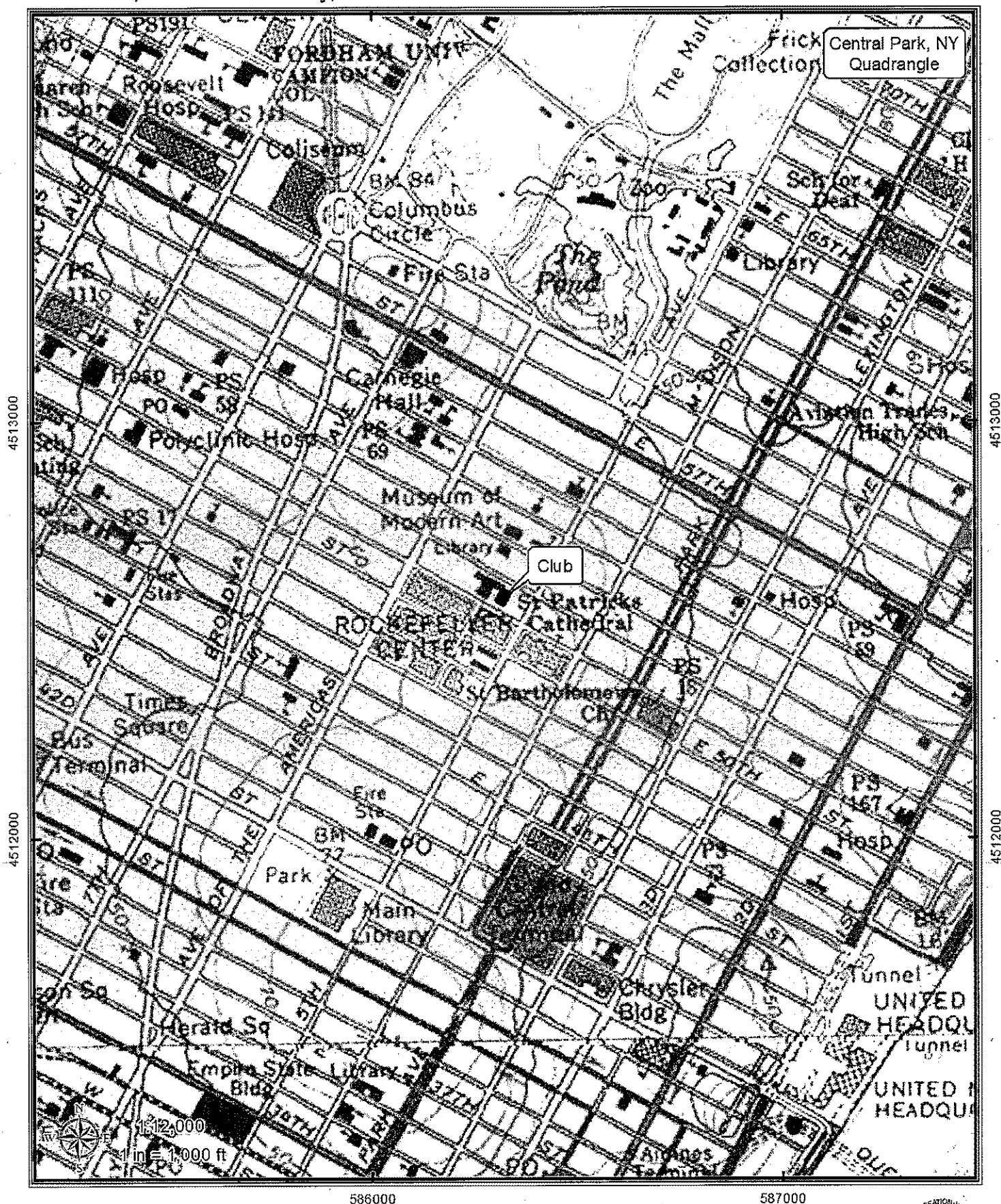


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: [http://www.yelp.com/biz\\_photos/womens-national-republican-club-new-york?select=1nzTiYnDCBMoXpaQLvv9qw#1nzTiYnDCBMoXpaQLvv9qw](http://www.yelp.com/biz_photos/womens-national-republican-club-new-york?select=1nzTiYnDCBMoXpaQLvv9qw#1nzTiYnDCBMoXpaQLvv9qw)

The Women's National Republican Club  
New York, New York County, NY

3 West 51st Street, LBBY 2  
New York, NY 10019-6981



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

0 295 590 1,180 Feet



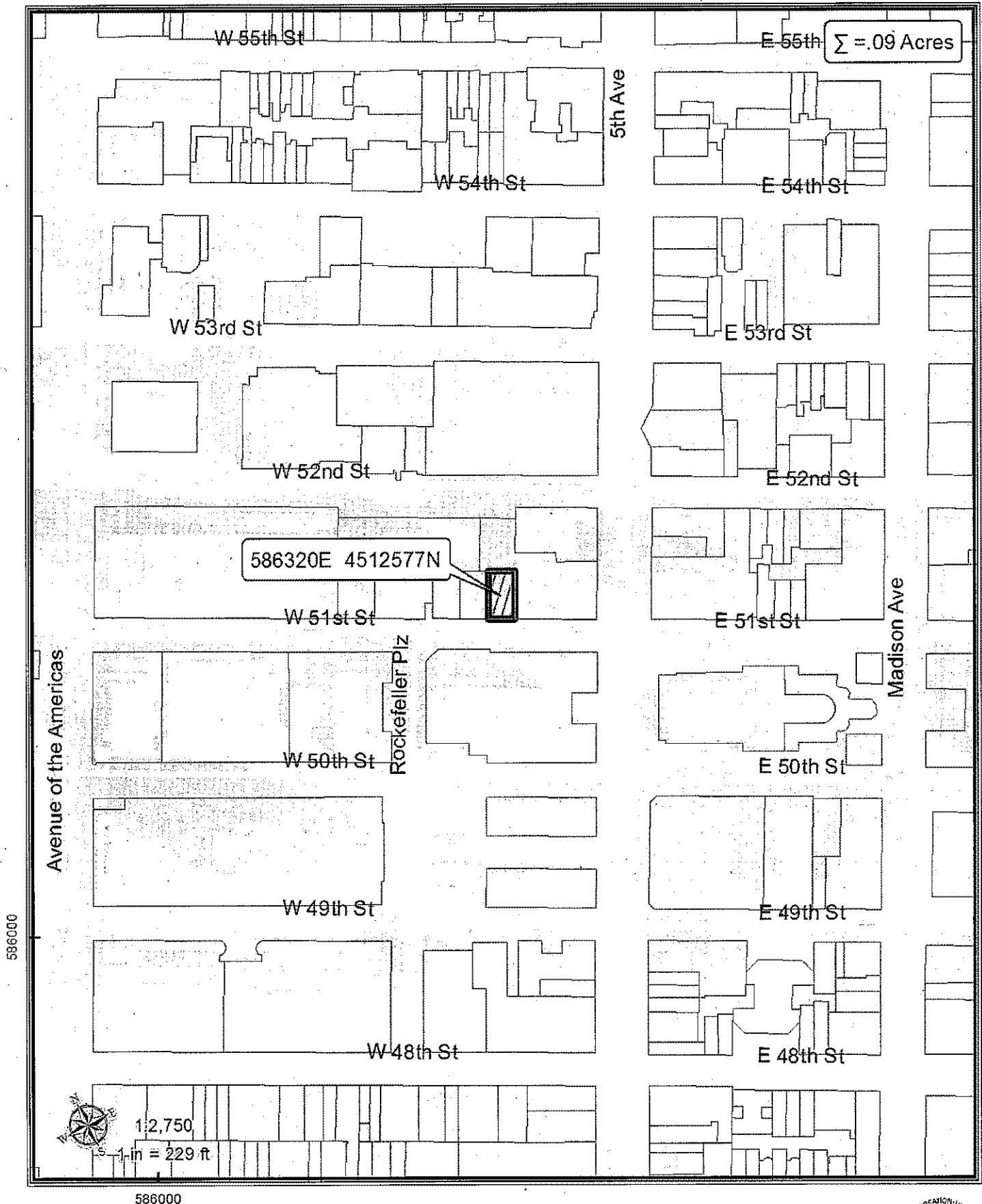
Woman's Republican Club

USGS Topo Quadrangle from  
Services@arcgisonline.com



The Women's National Republican Club  
New York, New York County, NY

3 West 51st Street, LBBY 2  
New York, NY 10019-6981



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

0 65 130 260 Feet



Woman's Republican Club

Tax Parcel Data:  
NYC. RPS

<http://gis.nyc.gov/doit/nycitymap>





**Landmarks Preservation  
Commission**

Robert B. Tierney  
Chair

October 24, 2012

Kate Daly  
Executive Director  
kdaly@lpc.nyc.gov

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

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

212 669 7926 tel  
212 669 7797 fax

Re: Women's National Republican Club, 3 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street, Manhattan

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

I write on behalf of Chair Robert B. Tierney in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of Women's National Republican Club, located at 3 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street in Manhattan, for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission's Director of Research Mary Beth Betts has reviewed the materials submitted by the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau and has determined that the Women's National Republican Club appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kate Daly

cc: Robert B. Tierney, Chair  
Mary Beth Betts



FIELD SERVICES BUREAU • DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
STATE AND NATIONAL REGISTERS OF HISTORIC PLACES PROGRAM

STATEMENT OF OWNER SUPPORT

Before an individual nomination proposal will be reviewed or nominated, the owner(s) of record must sign and date the following statement:

I, Catherine Lenihan, am the owner of the property at  
(print or type owner name) (President of Women's National  
Republican Club)  
3 West 51st St. New York NY  
(street number and name, city, village or town, state of nominated property)

I support its consideration and inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Catherine Lenihan  
(signature and date)

Mailing Address:

WNBC  
3 West 51st St  
New York, NY 10019

Revised 9/09











