

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 House at 49 East 80th Street

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 49 East 80th Street [] not for publication

city or town New York [] vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10021

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.)

Rudolph Perpoint DSHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

9/27/07
Date

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

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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	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	TOTAL

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

N/S

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls Stone.

Brick.

roof

other Metal

Narrative Description

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

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7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

No. 49 East 80th Street is a five-story, Art Deco style town house built in 1929-30. The house is located on Manhattan's Upper East Side on East 80th Street between Madison and Park avenues, a block with both houses and apartment buildings. It is one block north of the Upper East Side Historic District - Boundary Increase (National Register listed).

Exterior

Street façade (photos 1-4)

The house is five stories tall, including a slightly recessed, windowless attic story. The street front is designed in a restrained version of Art Deco. It is faced with multi-colored stone on the ground floor and brick in the upper stories.

Major decorative elements are found at the first story level, which is faced in a mix of stone and brick, with deliberately contrasting colors. There is an entrance on the west, a central window, and a garage door (not original) on the east. The door in the entrance is recessed, and has angled reveals. The door itself has a remarkable decorative metal entrance gate made of "Monel," one of the new metal alloys that became popular during this period. The entrance is capped with a cast-stone band adorned with abstract jagged incised line and the numerals "49" inscribed within a diamond shape. The central window is a metal casement; there is a planter in front of it with a hedge. The garage door replaced a secondary entrance and an adjoining wide window (visible in a photograph published in the *New York Times* in 1930¹; that article suggests that this space was originally a kitchen: "The kitchen is in front of the house." See attached copy of the article.) The entire first story is capped by a cast-stone band course adorned with typically Art Deco zigzags set in a complex but regular pattern.

The second story is faced in plain brick, and largely occupied by one enormous casement window, composed of four double-window sections, each with a transom. This story is capped by a band of bricks set at angles with their edges pointing outward. The third and fourth stories are faced in equally plain brick, but unlike the second story they include two four-light casements with transoms. They are separated from each other by another patterned brick course, this one of two rows of alternately projecting and recessed brick ends. The fourth story is capped by a complex pattern of brick corbelling set in pyramidal shapes. Above it rises the slightly recessed, and windowless, fifth story, capped by a decorative brick course similar to that which caps the second story.

¹ "Manhattan Private Home Plans At Low Record; Building Bureau Reports Only Four Designs Filed for Individual Dwellings Last Year Doomed by March of Business. Modernistic 'Type,'" *New York Times*, February 9, 1930, p.RE1.

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Garden façade (photos 5 & 6)

The garden façade rises five stories. It is faced in brick with plain window openings. The ground floor has a large French door opening from the house onto a raised terrace, under a retractable awning with a metal railing, and steps leading into a garden. The second floor has one large casement window, the central portion of which is a French door opening onto a fire-escape. The third, fourth and fifth stories each have two windows, a narrow opening on the east, and a wide opening on the west, each opening onto a fire-escape connecting with a metal ladder. The garden is landscaped and had various light fixtures.

Interior

First story

Entrance vestibule (photos 7 & 8)

The main entrance leads into a small entrance vestibule in the shape of an irregular octagon. The ceiling and floor are mirror image designs, the floor in terrazzo and the ceiling in plaster – each with a central octagonal portion.

Front hall (photos 9, 10, 12)

A doorway under a transom – each made of leaded glass set in geometric patterns – leads from the entrance vestibule into the front hall, whose walls are set at irregular angles. From this floor, an elegant, curving staircase with a Monel railing in abstract geometric patterns rises up through the first four stories of the house. There is also an Otis elevator.

Kitchen

A new kitchen has been inserted on the first floor. It opens onto the dining room.

Dining room (photos 11; 13-16)

The dining room is at the rear of the house, with French doors leading out into the garden. It has leaded glass doors in curving geometric patterns, and a decorative fireplace – which appears to be original – with a metal surround embossed with images of leafy fronds organized in symmetrical geometric patterns – a typically Art Deco approach to ornament.

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Second story

Library (photos 17-20)

The rear room is a library, with a large casement window looking out on the garden. It has paneled walls and a plaster ceiling, as well as a fireplace.

Sitting room (photos 21-24)

At the front of the house is a grand sitting room, with tall casement windows looking out on the street. Its walls have decorative pilasters with Art Deco style capitals supporting a flat architrave – also with Art Deco motifs – at the ceiling. A slightly projecting wall section includes a fireplace flanked by similar pilasters. The projecting fireplace surround is classical in inspiration: paneled pilasters supporting an architrave with oval ornamental sections, adorned with abstract geometric patterns.

Third and fourth stories

Bedrooms

The bedrooms have pilasters supporting a flat architrave, and large casement windows, similar to those in the second story sitting room.

Fifth story (photo 25)

This story was converted into a kitchen; its ceiling beams have been exposed, and there is a skylight with tiled edges.

Overall, the street front appears to survive almost entirely intact, with the sole exception of the new garage door. Much of the interior also survives, with the exception of the fifth floor converted into a kitchen.

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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)

Architecture

Period of Significance:

1929-1930

Significant Dates:

Significant Person:

n/a

Cultural Affiliation:

n/a

Architect/Bullder:

Jacobs, Harry Allan

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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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

No. 49 East 80th Street is an Art Deco style town house built 1929-30 for banker Lionello Perera, to designs by Harry Allan Jacobs. The house meets Criterion C as a rare example of Art Deco town house design in New York City. Jacobs claimed, credibly, that it was the first such town house built in Manhattan. Since it was one of only four Manhattan town houses built in 1930, and the Depression put an end to town-house development, it may well be also the only Art Deco town house built in Manhattan, and is certainly among the last town houses built on the Upper East Side. The house was among Jacobs's last commissions, designed just two years before his death.

Perera was the founder of a private bank that eventually merged with the Bank of America, on whose board he later served. His wife, Mrs. Carolyn Allen Perera, was a major philanthropist whose efforts were devoted to Italian-American causes and also the preservation and promotion of classical music, especially Italian opera. She held many musical evenings in the 80th Street house as part of fund-raisers. Music and fundraisers of a different sort came in 1970, when Barbara Streisand bought the house and hosted a fundraiser for Congressional candidate Bella Abzug.

Lionello and Carolyn Allen Perera

Lionello Perera² (1872/3 – 1942), born in Venice, Italy, immigrated to the United States in 1894 and shortly afterward established a private bank, Lionello Perera & Co. In 1926 the bank became the Commercial Exchange Bank (for which Perera built a Wall Street headquarters in 1927³) which in 1928 merged with the Bank of America; Perera became a member of the Board of Directors of Bank of America, a position he held until his retirement in 1932. Besides his banking career, Perera devoted much of his time to philanthropic work, much of it connected to Italy and Italian-Americans. During the First World War, he was chairman of the Italian section of the Liberty Loan drives; Mayor LaGuardia later appointed him to the Child Welfare Board of New York; and he also served as vice-president of the Italian-American Chamber of Commerce. He was also a founder of the East Harlem Health Center.

Perera's wife, Mrs. Carolyn Allen Perera⁴ (1888-1966), was a native Manhattanite, born on the Upper East Side. From early childhood, she loved classical music, and devoted much of her adult life to its promotion, and especially to the musical education of children. She married Lionello Perera – a family friend from the time she was nine years old – in 1904; with his help, she became fluent in Italian and devoted much of her energy to

² This brief account is based primarily on "Lionello Perera, Banker, Dies at 69," obituary, *New York Times* April 27, 1942, p.15.

³ "Samuel Levy Buys Wall St. Offices," *New York Times*, December 27, 1940, p.36; New York City Buildings Department, Manhattan, New Building application 210 of 1927.

⁴ This account is based on "Mrs. Perera dies; led welfare work," obituary, *New York Times*, September 25, 1966, p. 84, and material in the "Mrs. Lionello Perera Papers, 1888-1966," at the New York Public Library, Division of Performing Arts.

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Italian music, culture and charitable organizations. These included the Italian Division of the American Red Cross during World War I, and the Italian Welfare League, which she founded in 1920 to provide for new Italian immigrants. Her work with immigrants eventually earned her, in 1961, the Star of Solidarity from the Italian government.

The bulk of Mrs. Perera's activities, however, were devoted to music. Through her work with the Italian Welfare League, she met Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini, on tour at the time with the orchestra of La Scala, the famed Milan opera house, and they became fast friends. Eventually, Mrs. Perera became a founder of the Toscanini Memorial Archives at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. While suffering from an attack of arthritis in 1950, she received a gift from Toscanini of a biography of Giuseppe Verdi, the Italian opera composer, and she became a noted collector of Verdi material, including letters, photographs and rare editions. Other musical interests included work for the Henry Street Settlement Music School on New York's Lower East Side, as well as for the Marlboro Music School in Marlboro, Vermont.

In 1929, a year after Lionello Perera merged his bank with the Bank of America, the Pereras commissioned a town house at 49 East 80th Street on Manhattan's Upper East Side, designed by architect Harry Allen Jacobs.

The Upper East Side and the Town House

During the decades following the end of the Civil War – in response to the opening of Central Park, the extension of the city's horse-car lines beyond 59th Street along Second, Third and Madison avenues⁵, and especially the extension of the Third Avenue elevated line in 1878, in stages, from 42nd Street to 129th Street, and the Second Avenue elevated to 129th Street in 1880 – Manhattan's Upper East Side developed into the city's premier residential district.⁶

In 1879 the new elevated roads contributed much to the increasing strength of the market. Particularly on the upper [sic] East Side they stimulated the builder, who was already busy in that district.... Population was spreading into the East Side, and the northeastern part of the island.... Everywhere on the East Side people were buying and selling and building.⁷

As the Upper East Side took shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the area between Central Park and Park Avenue developed as an enclave of mansions, especially along Fifth Avenue, while the side streets were lined with elegant Beaux-Arts town houses. In the second and third decades of the 20th century, however, much of the area was built up or rebuilt with apartment houses,⁸ and by 1930 town house development had almost

⁵ *A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City During the Last Quarter of a Century* (New York: Record and Guide, 1898; reprint New York: Arno Press, 1967), p. 60.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

⁸ For more on the history and architecture of the Upper East Side, see New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report* (New York: City of New York, 1981).

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completely run its course. No. 49 East 80th Street was one of the very last such town houses built on the Upper East Side.

Harry Allen Jacobs and the Advent of Modernism in New York City

Harry Allan Jacobs (1872-1932) studied architecture at Columbia University, graduating in 1894. He continued his studies in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and in 1896 was awarded a Rome Prize by the American Academy in Rome.

During the first two decades of the 20th century, Jacobs developed a thriving practice, specializing in town houses for well-to-do New Yorkers, especially on the Upper East Side. One of his earliest houses was designed in 1908 for Charles S. Guggenheimer on East 73rd Street; as described by the *New York Times*, "it affords an excellent example of Italian Renaissance architecture and shows an originality seldom found in a twenty-two-foot residence."⁹ Other Upper East Side town houses included a residence for John W. Herbert at 835 Fifth Avenue in 1912,¹⁰ and a "six-story stone front English basement dwelling" at 10 East 72nd Street (in NR-listed Upper East Side Historic District) in 1919.¹¹ In 1920, for Broadway impresario Martin Beck, he designed a luxurious, six-story tall, neo-Classical, limestone-fronted house, at 13 E. 67th Street (in NR-listed Upper East Side Historic District), which included a stage and a squash court.¹² The following year he designed three houses for banker and art patron Otto H. Kahn on East 68th Street, one of which was described as a "five-story English basement residence."¹³ For Mrs. James Leopold he designed an "American basement" house at 48 East 80th Street, described by the *New York Times* as "one of the finest residences on the east side."¹⁴

Jacobs's work was noticed in both the daily press and the architectural press. An entire issue of the *New York Architect* was largely devoted to his buildings.¹⁵ An article describing his work in *Arts and Decoration* was entitled: "Versatility and conservatism in architecture: some recent examples of the varied work of Harry Allen Jacobs."¹⁶ One of his most noted designs – and one which particularly displayed his facility with historic styles, in this case the Tudor – was the new home for the Friars Club, described by the *Times* as

...one of the most complete and handsomest clubs in the city, with every arrangement for the convenience and comfort of the club's members. In making the plans for the building Harry Allan

⁹ "Unique Residence Façade," *New York Times*, August 30, 1908, p.10.

¹⁰ "Renewed Activity in Private Dwellings in Upper Fifth Avenue Residential Zone," *New York Times*, December 8, 1912, p. XX3.

¹¹ *New York Times*, May 29, 1919 p.28.

¹² "Mrs. Rockefeller Desires to Decamp for Paris," *New York Times*, April 23, 1928 p.F10; the article describes the house after it was sold by a later owner, Mrs. Barbara Sears Rockefeller.

¹³ *New York Times*, April 26, 1921, p.35: "Otto H. Kahn sold the new five-story English basement residence at 8 East Sixty-eighth Street. This is one of three houses built by Mr. Kahn on the site of his former residence from plans by Harry Allen Jacobs."

¹⁴ "Costly Residence Sold," *New York Times*, April 9, 1925, p. 40.

¹⁵ *New York Architect*, August 1911, vol. 5.

¹⁶ C. Matlack Price, "Versatility and conservatism in architecture: some recent examples of the varied work of Harry Allen Jacobs," *Arts and Decoration*, January 1912, vol. 2, pp. 93-95.

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Jacobs, the architect, endeavored to create as fully as possible the atmosphere of a monastery. The facade is in the Tudor Gothic style with leaded windows and topped by a tile mansard roof.¹⁷

Jacobs's commissions included commercial buildings, among them hotels and stores. He also designed a number of charitable institutional buildings, including the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society building in Pleasantville, the Stamford Children's Home, and the Andrew Freedman Home on the Grand Concourse¹⁸

Perhaps surprisingly, however, in the 1920s Jacobs evolved from his earlier historicist designs for expensive town houses in two unexpected directions: on the one hand, as the creator of grand, if somewhat fantastic, plans for urban improvement, and on the other as a supporter of the Modernism emerging in American architecture.

During the mid-1920s, Jacobs was appointed to Mayor James ("Gentleman Jimmy") Walker's Committee on Plan and Survey. He was also active in the Municipal Art Society (MAS). As early as 1915, as Treasurer of the MAS, he announced a competition to solve the growing problem of traffic-clogged intersections.¹⁹ In 1919, he proposed plans for creating moderately-priced housing.²⁰ But only in the 1920s did his planning imagination begin to soar. In 1922 he proposed a plan to relieve Fifth Avenue congestion by widening the roadway, running colonnades along the narrowed sidewalks, and using the columns to support a raised promenade, fifteen feet wide, at the level of the avenue's second-story store windows, with bridges across the intersections connecting the promenades.²¹ He continued to push for the plan for several years, describing it in 1925:

"My plan calls for cutting down each sidewalk to ten feet, which will increase the roadway between the two curbs to about eight feet," he said. "To make up for the cutting down on the sidewalks the scheme calls for another concrete sidewalk fifteen feet above the lower one on each side of the street. An architectural colonnade composed of stone or granite columns built on the top of the curb will support the superimposed sidewalk, which will be ten feet wide. Five feet of this sidewalk will cantilever into the street and the other five feet will cantilever over the sidewalk below."²²

The following year, however, he proposed a far more radical scheme for relieving Manhattan congestion:

¹⁷ "Friars Open Their New Monastery; Parade to Housewarming of West 48th St. Clubhouse, One of Handsomest in City. FACADE IS TUDOR GOTHIC - Big Grillroom Gives Effect of a Crypt - Banquet Hall, Stage, Gymnasium, and Roof Garden," *New York Times*, May 23, 1916, p.22

¹⁸ In association with architect Joseph H. Freedlander.

¹⁹ "Crowded Streets in Prize Contest - Municipal Art Society Asks for Plans to Relieve Congestion at Busy Intersections," *New York Times*, March 22, 1915, p.4.

²⁰ "Unique Plan to Solve Housing Problem Presented to the Mayor - How Six-Room Houses Can Be Built in Groups of Four with All Improvements for 42,250 Each Explained by Harry Allen Jacobs," *New York Times*, May 4, 1919, p.116.

²¹ "PLAN TO RELIEVE FIFTH AVENUE CONGESTION BY WIDENING ROADWAY AND DECKING SIDEWALKS; A Compromise of the European Arcade. Forming an Architectural Colonnade on Stone Columns and Affording a Promenade Fifteen Feet Wide, Level With Second-story Store Windows," *New York Times* January 22, 1922, p.104.

²² "Has Arcade Plan to Relieve 5th Av. - H.A. Jacobs Outlines at Architects' Exposition His Scheme for Terraced Walks," *New York Times*, April 24, 1925, p.7.

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"We have tried to correct this congestion," he says, "with subways, bridges and tunnels, but it has only been a makeshift policy. The real solution of the problem is to make the city wider, and the way to do this is to fill in the East River, making Brooklyn and Manhattan one strip of land."²³

Failing that, he proposed spanning the East River between Manhattan and Queens with bridges...

...at intervals of six or ten blocks, much as the Seine is spanned in Paris. He would not build any more gigantic bridges such as now connect Manhattan with Brooklyn and Queens, but would have them only about thirty feet above the water and resting upon piers....²⁴

Jacobs had similarly inventive plans to create new 100 new city parks, and a series of elevated enclosed playgrounds rising above the city's streets.

Futuristic as Jacob's plans were in the mid-1920s, his interest in modernism in architectural styles did not appear until 1930 and 1931, when he published a series of articles on the subject in the *Times*.

In his opening article, in November of 1930, Jacobs traced the development of Western architecture, following it to North America, and describing the kind of historically-based architecture of which he himself had been an exponent earlier in the century. But now, he wrote:

With a relentless machine age of a materialistic and practical people, with new building materials and revolutionary ideas, came the demand for something new and more appropriate for our problems. The doing away with classic cornices with their ridiculous overhanging projections, designed for high buildings, was one of the first sensible steps in modern architecture. These cornices were expensive to construct and killed the light of the stories under them. Then followed the new zoning laws with the setbacks to give additional light and air into the streets as one climb [sic] skyward. You planned your buildings for your requirements - putting windows where they ought to go and let the facade take its natural course. Expensive detail and carving were eliminated, as it could not be seen, and the architect came to rely for his effect on strong masses, to produce light and shade, so that today we have a distinct new modern architectural style - beautiful in its honesty and sincerity of purpose. We are doing great things with it and the colleges are teaching its best principles. The architects throughout the country are enthusiastic about it....²⁵

²³ "Fill in East River to Ease Congestion - Harry A. Jacobs Suggests Joining Manhattan and Brooklyn With Wide Parkway," *New York Times*, August 22, 1926 p.RE2.

²⁴ "PARIS-TYPE BRIDGES IN EAST RIVER URGED; H.A. Jacobs, Architect, Would Span the Stream at Intervals of Six to Ten Blocks. STRUCTURES 30 FEET HIGH Resting on Piers, They Would Bar Large Ships, but Relieve Congestion in City. HARLEM RIVER AS OUTLET Dredged and Widened, It Would Be New Marine Thoroughfare -- Mayor's Committee to Get Plan," *New York Times*, October 10, 1926 p.E1.

²⁵ "New Architecture Based on Utility - Buildings are Expressive of Modern Life, says Harry A. Jacobs - Show Honesty of Purpose," *New York Times*, November 30, 1930 p. RE2.

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In sum:

This is a materialistic, scientific and practical age that Jules Verne could not picture with his wildest imagination: Radio, the spanning of the continent with the telephone, the talkies, television, the airplane and dirigible, mass production, newest machinery and what not, cannot be expressed in an Italian Renaissance or other styles of the past, and so at last we have a new style, which in a hundred years from now history will record as a distinct and as clearly defined an epoch as any of the past.²⁶

Jacobs followed this article up with pieces praising the modernist work of Raymond Hood ("The News Building is a fine contribution to American architecture. It expresses our times and the manners and customs of our people"²⁷); Harvey Wiley Corbett; and Ely Jacques Kahn ("Mr. Kahn has been a modernist for many years. His work is in the best of taste and knowing the past as well as he does he is enabled to apply this knowledge to the greatest advantage"²⁸), and recounted meetings at which classicists and modernists argued the merits of their respective cases, while Jacobs, in his own words, "being a broad-minded and liberal individual... sat at the head of the table and acted the 'umpire' for the wild and various discussions of all things architectural and otherwise."²⁹

Jacobs died in 1932, just 60 years old, but not before he had had a chance to design a Modern version of the Upper East Side town houses with which he'd made his mark in earlier decades: No. 49 East 80th Street.

The House at 49 East 80th Street

Jacobs filed a New Building³⁰ application for the Perera house in 1929, describing it as a five-story building 25 feet wide by 65 feet deep, leaving room at the back for a spacious garden. As announced in the *Times*:

...Lionello Perera has just completed a five-story home of modernistic type designed in the office of Harry Allan Jacobs. The dwelling contains twenty rooms, with an English basement. The kitchen is in front of the house, and the rear portion of the lot will be made into a garden. The exterior is of brick and stone in simple lines, and the plaster walls of the interior also have been laid in a style known as "severe."³¹

Jacobs was quoted in the article:

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "Raymond Hood Uses Tablecloths and Pillars In Planning Modern Skyscrapers," *New York Times*, December 7, 1930, p. 172.

²⁸ "Color in Architecture," *New York Times*, December 28, 1930 P. RE2.

²⁹ "Architects Discuss Future Building - A Friendly Clash Between Classicists and Modernists at the Architectural League - Anthills or Playgrounds? - Raymond Hood Says Skyscrapers will Dominate and That Radio City Will Prove His Theory," *New York Times* December 13, 1931, p. RE2.

³⁰ New York Buildings Department, Manhattan, New Building application 201 of 1929.

³¹ "Manhattan Private Home Plans At Low Record," *New York Times*, February 9, 1930, p. RE1.

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"The house is designed in a modernistic spirit in decoration as well as in materials, as representative of this materialistic, artificial and practical age," Mr. Jacobs explained. "I believe it is the first single-family home of this type to be built entirely in this mode in Manhattan."³²

The house as designed by Jacobs was four stories tall, with a fifth, slightly recessed, attic story above. In style it is a very restrained version of what today would be called "Art Deco," faced with stone on the ground floor and brick in the upper stories. Its major decorative features are found at the ground floor level, including a mix of stone and brick, a cast-stone ornamental band over the entrance way with the numerals "49" inscribed within it, and a remarkable decorative metal entrance gate made of "Monel," one of the new metal alloys that became popular during this period. Ornament in the upper stories includes bands of ornamental brickwork and a brick cornice.

Monel was one of the many new materials – plastics like Bakelite and Vitrolite, metal alloys like "nickel-silver" and "Nirosta," the nickel-chrome-steel alloy used in the towering spire of the Chrysler Building – incorporated into Modern and Art Deco buildings of the period. The International Nickel Company, which manufactured Monel, put out a brochure called *Practical Design in Monel Metal* (see attached) that featured not only the entrance gate at 49 East 80th Street, but also the Monel staircase railing inside that rises through four stories.³³

The house has often been noted as an unusual design. In 1943, the *Times* reported that it "is considered a fine example of modern town house architecture."³⁴ In 2004, Christopher Gray, also in the *Times*, called it "one of the most outstanding [houses] on the Upper East Side."³⁵

Besides being, as far as can be determined, the first Art Deco town house in Manhattan, No. 49 East 80th Street was also one of the very last town houses of any style built in the borough – and one of only four built in 1930. The Depression largely put an end to the building of such houses, as Manhattan became more completely developed with multiple dwellings. No. 49 East 80th street thus marks both a beginning – Modernism in town houses – and an end – the end of the town house in Manhattan. And while Manhattan's developers in the 1930s built many Art Deco apartment houses, No. 49 East 80th appears to be not only the first, but also one of the very few, and possibly the only Art Deco town house anywhere in Manhattan.

Subsequent History

The Pereras lived at 49 East 80th Street from 1930 until Lionello Perera's death in 1942. During those years, Carolyn Allen Perera held many musical evenings, often as fund-raisers for her various charitable activities.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Practical Design in Monel Metal For Architectural and Decorative Purposes: A Manual for Architects and Metal Craftsmen Defining the Decorative Uses and Limitations of Monel Metal and Presenting a Technique for Developing those Uses in the most Practical and Economical Manner* (New York: The International Nickel Company, Inc., 67 Wall Street; n.d.), pp 44-45.

³⁴ "East Side Home Leased With Purchase Option," *New York Times*, January 15, 1943 p.31.

³⁵ Christopher Gray, "A Block With Rare Windows and Unusual Statues," *New York Times*, Mar 7, 2004, p.11.

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In 1942, Mrs. Perera leased the house – and then sold it in 1944 – to Walter Edward Sachs, a grandson of a founder of the investment banking firm of Goldman Sachs.³⁶ The house changed hands again only in 1970, when it was bought by Barbra Streisand.³⁷ Shortly after moving in (two weeks later), Streisand held a major fund-raiser in the house for Bella Abzug, the future long-time New York Congresswoman who was making her first run for that office; 3000 people attended.³⁸

Over the decades, the interior of the house has seen some renovations, but much of the original survives. Today, under new ownership, No. 49 East 80th Street stands as a remarkable and rare survivor of the intersection of the beginning of Modern or Art Deco styling and the end of Manhattan town house development.

³⁶ "Town House Sold," *New York Times*, February 26, 1944, p.24; see also "Barbra Streisand's 5-story Compromise" below.

³⁷ "Barbra Streisand's 5-Story Compromise," *New York Times*, June 5, 1970, p.47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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"Crowded Streets in Prize Contest - Municipal Art Society Asks for Plans to Relieve Congestion at Busy Intersections." March 22, 1915, p.4.

"Friars Open Their New Monastery; Parade to Housewarming of West 48th St. Clubhouse, One of Handsomest in City. Facade Is Tudor Gothic - Big Grillroom Gives Effect of a Crypt :- Banquet Hall, Stage, Gymnasium, and Roof Garden." May 23, 1916, p.22.

"Unique Plan to Solve Housing Problem Presented to the Mayor - How Six-Room Houses Can Be Built in Groups of Four with All Improvements for 42,250 Each Explained by Harry Allen Jacobs." May 4, 1919, p.116. May 29, 1919 p.28. April 26, 1921, p.35

"Plan To Relieve Fifth Avenue Congestion By Widening Roadway And Decking Sidewalks; A Compromise of the European Arcade, Forming an Architectural Colonnade on Stone Columns and Affording a Promenade Fifteen Feet Wide, Level With Second-story Store Windows." January 22, 1922, p.104.

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"Fill in East River to Ease Congestion - Harry A. Jacobs Suggests Joining Manhattan and Brooklyn With Wide Parkway." August 22, 1926 p.RE2.

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"Manhattan Private Home Plans At Low Record." February 9, 1930, p. RE1.

"Samuel Levy Buys Wall St. Offices." December 27, 1940, p.36;

"Lionello Perera, Banker, Dies at 69." Obituary, April 27, 1942, p.15.

"East Side Home Leased With Purchase Option." January 15, 1943 p.31.

"Town House Sold." February 26, 1944, p.24.

"Mrs. Perera dies; led welfare work." Obituary, September 25, 1966, p. 84,

"Barbra Streisand's 5-Story Compromise." June 5, 1970, p.47.

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"Mrs. Rockefeller Desires to Decamp for Paris." April 23, 1998 p.F10.

Christopher Gray. "A Block With Rare Windows and Unusual Statues." Mar 7, 2004, p.11.

House at 49 East 80th Street
Name of Property

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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 7 6 6 4 4 5 1 4 5 1 8
Zone Easting Northing

3 1 8
Zone Easting Northing

2 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 Contact: Kathleen A. Howe, Historic Preservation Program Analyst
organization NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Bureau of Historic Preservation date July 2, 2007
street & number Peebles Island State Park, PO Box 189 telephone 518-237-8643, ext.3266
city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188

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 location
A **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 Michael T. Cohen
street & number 49 East 80th Street telephone 212-879-7543
city or town New York state NY zip code 10021

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. 20503

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as Manhattan Block 1492, Lot 25. The boundary is outlined on the accompanying Sanborn map.

Boundary Justification

The nomination boundary includes the entire lot that is historically and currently associated with this property.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Anthony W. Robins
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New York, NY 10023
(212) 877-7637

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ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Black and white photographs

49 East 80th Street

New York County, NY

Photos by: Anthony W. Robins

Date: October 2006

.TIF files on CD-R on file at NPS

1. 49 E.80th Street in its block front, north side of E.80th Street, looking northeast
2. Façade, looking north
3. Façade, first story, looking north
4. Façade, first story, ornament above main entrance, looking north
5. Rear façade, upper floors, looking south
6. Rear façade, first story, looking south
7. First floor, entrance vestibule, looking out towards 80th Street
8. First story, entrance vestibule ceiling
9. First story, front hall and vestibule door, looking south
10. First story, front hall staircase and Monel railing
11. First story, dining room casement windows and door to back garden
12. Staircase and Monel railing, detail
13. First story, dining room wall
14. First story, dining room doors
15. First story, dining room fireplace
16. First story, dining room light fixture
17. Second story, library, looking north
18. Second story, library fireplace
19. Second story, library wall light fixture
20. Second story, library ceiling light fixture
21. Second story, sitting room detail, looking north
22. Second story, sitting room, looking south
23. Second story, sitting room fireplace at south wall
24. Second story, sitting room wall molding
25. Fifth story, present kitchen.

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NY Times Article showing photo of 49 East 80th Street

"Manhattan Private Home Plans At Low Record." New York Times, February 9, 1930, p. RE1.

Monel Metal brochure showing photos of door grille and stair railing at 49 E. 80th St.

Practical Design in Monel Metal For Architectural and Decorative Purposes: A Manual for Architects and Metal Craftsmen Defining the Decorative Uses and Limitations of Monel Metal and Presenting a Technique for Developing those Uses in the most Practical and Economical Manner. New York: The International Nickel Company, Inc., 67 Wall Street; n.d.

House at
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New York County, NY.

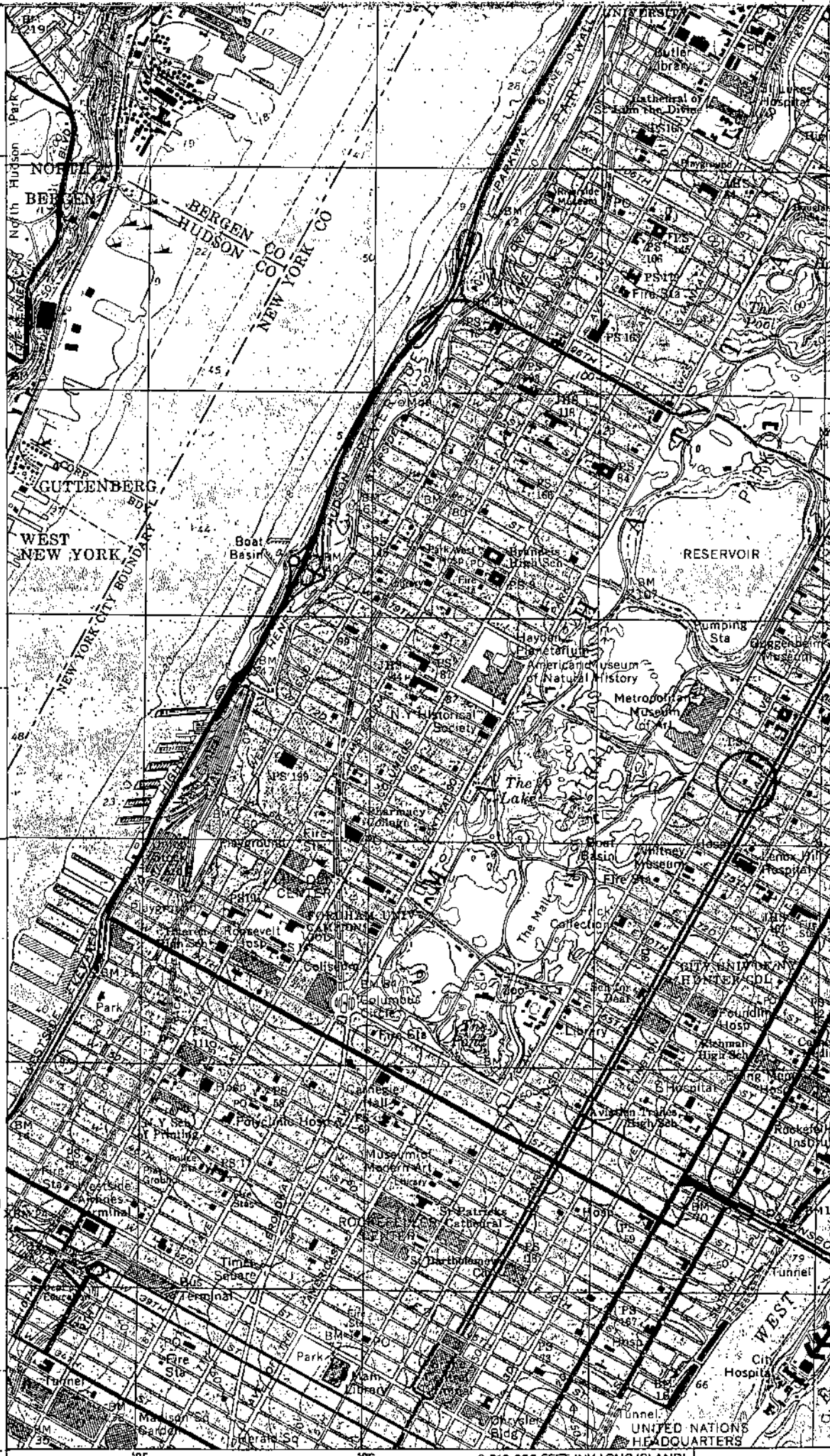
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Northing: 4514518
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Central Park Quad
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200 000 FEET
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40°45'
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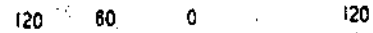
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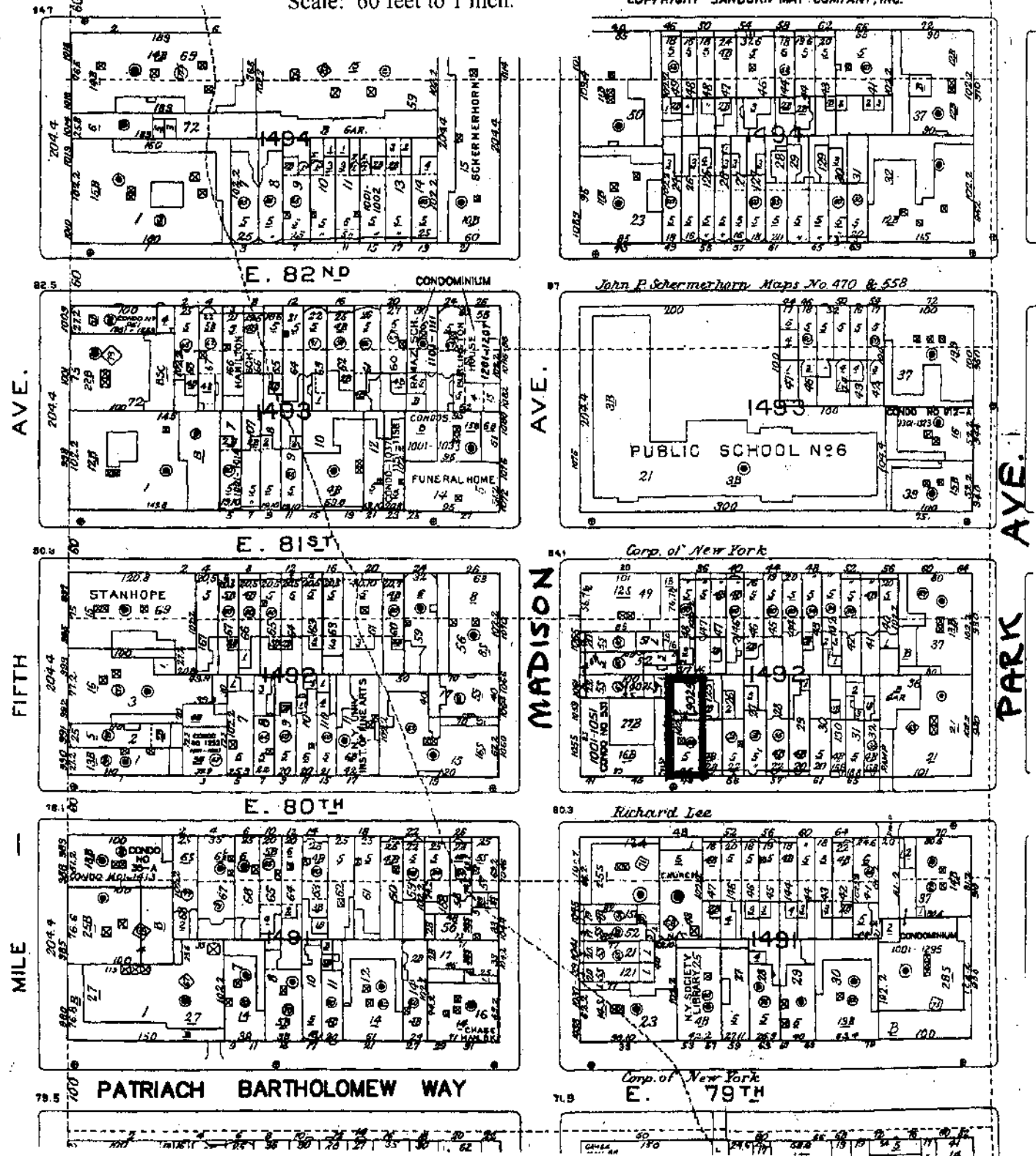
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