

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

OMB NO. 1024-0018, NPS FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets. Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Manhattan Avenue-West 120th-123rd Streets Historic District
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 242-262 W.120th St., 341-362 W.121st. St., 341-362 W.122nd St., 344-373 123rd St., 481-553 Manhattan Ave. (west side) | | not for publication
city, town New York | | vicinity
state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10027

3. Classification

Ownership of property	Category	Number of resources within property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>113</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		_____ objects
		<u>113</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listings: N/A Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, this property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Julia S. Asher _____ Date 11/21/91
Signature of certifying official
Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. _____
 See continuation sheet. _____
 determined eligible for the National Register. see continuation sheet. _____
 determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
 removed from the National Register. _____
 other, (explain:)

Signature of keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(enter categories from introductions)
Domestic/ single dwellings

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)
Domestic/ single dwellings

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Grec, Queen Anne,
Renaissance

Materials(enter categories from instructions)

foundation Coursed ashlar
walls Brownstone, limestone, brick
roof n/a
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Manhattan Avenue/West 120th-123rd Streets Historic District lies on the western edge of Central Harlem where Morningside Park and its steep wooded bluff separates this purely residential neighborhood from the education and religious institutions and commercial blocks of Morningside Heights. The district is composed of 113 contributing brownstone and brick row houses on the four short blocks between 120th and 123rd Streets bounded by Morningside and Manhattan Avenues. The district is located northeast of Morningside Park. Morningside Park is a narrow, one and one-half block wide ribbon of land which runs from 110th to 123rd Street between Morningside Drive and Morningside Avenue. The park is notable for its rocky terrain and steep bluff which clearly separate the Morningside Heights and Manhattanville neighborhoods. The 113-building district is characterized by unbroken blocks of residences, each three-stories above a raised basement, built between 1886 and 1896, which represent a succession of styles that dominated American domestic architecture during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century; Neo-Grec, Queen Anne, Romanesque and Renaissance Revival. These houses were built in blocks by builder/architects as part of the speculative boom which overtook Harlem during the 1880s and 1890s. The streetscapes are distinguished by uniform height and setbacks, raised basements, stoops and overall level of ornamentation applied to the buildings.

The houses within the historic district form a cohesive group distinct from the surrounding tenements and apartment buildings in both scale and quality of construction. When viewed on a New York City tax map, the district boundaries are defined by the concentration of small individual dwelling lots which contrast sharply with the larger

[X] see continuation sheet

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surrounding lots of tenements, apartment buildings and, to the north, a hospital now used as a home for the aged. The physical boundaries of the district are emphasized by the scale, density and quality of its homogeneous streetscapes. The district contains four vacant lots and four, one story, non-contributing concrete block garages built in the rear yards of otherwise contributing corner buildings.

NEO-GREC STYLE:

Within the historic district, the houses at 365-373 and 345-363 West 123rd Street and 507-527 Manhattan Avenue, built during the period 1885-1887, are excellent examples of the Neo-Grec style which replaced the Italianate and Second Empire styles on New York rowhouses during the mid-1870s.

The Neo-Grec rowhouse retained the smooth brownstone front, boldly protruding cornice, heavy doorways and window details of the earlier Italianate style. These details, however, lost their previously rounded form and took on a new rectilinearity and precision thought to be more modern and expressive of the increasingly industrialized society.[1] In addition to these important characteristics, the houses of this group exhibit simple pressed metal cornices resting on rectangular brackets, incised Eastlake style motifs and Neo-Grec style fluting on door hoods, window surrounds and stoop ironwork. The bay windows at 367-373 West 123rd Street temper the monumental streetscape of smooth brownstone fronts typical of the Neo-Grec style and reflect a demand for individuality in rowhouse design that would ultimately lead to public preference for the more eclectic Queen Anne style.

QUEEN ANNE STYLE:

1. Charles Lockwood, Bricks and Brownstone. (New York, N.Y., 1972), p.227.

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The majority of houses in the historic district can be classified as representatives of the Queen Anne style, which emerged in the United States during the middle 1870s and became New York's dominant rowhouse style in the early 1880s. The artful use of contrasting materials and textures, and picturesque asymmetrical massing, represented a movement away from the tradition of historic revival styles.[2] Although the style was widely accepted in the design of New York rowhouses, few builder/architects adopted all of the style's characteristics. Most examples within the district continued the tradition of flat brownstone facades while choosing freely among Byzantine, Romanesque, Renaissance and Colonial styles for applied ornament.

The houses in the historic district most readily recognizable as Queen Anne are in the half block 345-363 West 123rd Street. The elevations on this row of ten red brick houses alternate two peaked roofs, two mansard roof forms and feature tall picturesque chimneys and applied terra-cotta detail. The houses at 487, 489 and 497 Manhattan Avenue also employ peaked gables, red brick upper stories and rusticated brownstone in the lower stories. An excellent example of the application of the eclectic Queen Anne style aesthetic to the otherwise plain rowhouse form is at 485 Manhattan Avenue. This house features Renaissance inspired fluted pilasters and garlands, an oversized and stylized acanthus leaf above the parlor window similar to those found in Greek Revival architecture and Italianate pedimented lintels on the third floor. The houses at 342-362 and 341-359 West 121st Street and 342-360 and 341-361 West 122nd Street are interesting in their use of applied Romanesque details, including rusticated string courses, arched doorways, and small corbelled piers supporting ornate cornices. The houses in the block 529-553 Manhattan Avenue, which use concave pent roofs carved to resemble shingles above the parlor and second story windows. The houses within the historic district recognizable as Queen Anne in style were built during the period 1885-1892.

2. Ibid., p.232.

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RENAISSANCE STYLE:

The Renaissance Revival style rowhouse typically included a facade of light-colored limestone or yellow brick. Symmetrical block fronts relied on applied detail for stylistic impact.[3] The buildings at 351-369 West 120th Street are readily identifiable as Renaissance style, as the upper two stories at 353, 357 and 365 are of light-colored limestone and all the houses on the block employ the popular motifs of the style: Classically derived wreaths, garlands, fluted pilasters and carved string courses. These details were primarily inspired by Florentine woodcarving of the sixteenth century. This block of houses was built during the period from 1895-1896.

The following is a complete list of the buildings located within the boundary of the 123rd Street Historic District.

3. Ibid., p.236.

BUILDING LIST: Manhattan Avenue/West 120th-123rd Streets Historic District:

West 120th Street, North Side: Numbers 351-369

Architect: Mr. John Hauser
Builder: Same
Constructed: June 17, 1895 - February 28, 1896

Bldg# Description

- 351 Renaissance Revival, three-story and basement, smooth brownstone rowhouse. Lower two floors: plain front with elaborate carved floral panels between and below parlor windows. Simple carved rectangular doorway. Upper two floors: bowfront with simple stringcourse in place of lintels and sills. Elaborate bowed metal cornice on rectangular brackets. No stoop. Painted brown.
- 353 Renaissance Revival, three-story and basement rowhouse. Lower two floors: smooth plain brownstone facade with elaborate carved floral panels between and below parlor windows. Arched doorway with carved spandrels supported by Corinthian pilasters. Upper two floors: smooth limestone bowfront with simple continuous stringcourses in place of lintels and sills. Elaborate bowed metal cornice designed without brackets. Retains original masonry stoop. Painted brown.
- 355 Identical to 351 with original doors and stoop.
- 357 Identical to 353.
- 359 Renaissance Revival, three-story and basement plain front brownstone rowhouse. Elaborate carved floral panels between and below parlor windows. Rectangular doorway with carved surround. Third floor: simple straight and pedimented lintels, stringcourses in place of sills. Fourth floor: arched windows with simple, straight lintels and carved spandrels. Stringcourse in place of sills. Elaborate metal cornice with diminutive arches and piers. Original masonry stoop. Painted brown.

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- 361 Identical to 353 except limestone unpainted, cornice on rectangular brackets. Missing stoop newel.
- 363 Identical to 359 except arched windows with carved keystones on parlor floor, arched windows with keystone and supporting carved stringcourse on the third floor. Simple stringcourse in the place of lintels surmounted by a peaked pediment on the fourth floor.
- 365 Identical to 353 except limestone, unpainted and cornice supported by rectangular brackets.
- 367 Identical to 359 except missing stoop.
- 369 Renaissance revival, three-story and basement smooth brownstone rowhouse with four-story half bay. Elaborate carved floral panels between and below parlor windows. Rectangular doorway with carved surround. Continuous stringcourses in place of lintels and sills. Badly damaged, elaborate metal cornice with diminutive arches and piers. Missing stoop, unpainted and badly spalling.

West 121st Street, South Side: Numbers 242-262 ← should be 342-362

Architect: Mr. J.A. Webster.
Builder: Same.
Constructed: October 15, 1891 - September 30, 1892

Bldg#	Description
342	Queen Anne (with Romanesque detail), three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone rowhouse with carved and rusticated stringcourses (4 per floor, evenly spaced). rectangular door hood supported by paired corbelled diminutive columns. Protruding straight lintels supported by brackets with stylized carved acanthus leaves. Sills are simple, metal cornice supported by two rows of interlocking dentils. Original stoop, ironwork and doors. Painted brown.
344-358	Identical to 342 except door hoods supported by corbelled pilasters.

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- 360 Identical to 342.
- 362 Identical to 342 but with three-story and basement square half bay.

West 121 Street, North Side: Numbers 341-359:

Architect: Mr. J.A. Webster.
Builder: Same.
Constructed: September 8, 1890 - August 31, 1891

Block# Description

- 341 Queen Anne style (with Romanesque details), three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone rowhouse with stringcourses carved in Renaissance style (one per floor centered on windows). rectangular doorway surmounted by an arched and quoined door surround with inset diminutive quarter columns and carved "woodsman." Protruding straight lintels supported by fluted brackets. No bracket on the parlor level. Sills are simple. Intricate metal cornice supported by rectangular brackets. Original stoop and ironwork. Painted brown.
- 343 Identical to 341 except door surmounted by rectangular door hood supported by carved and elongated brackets. Original doors.
- 345-357 Identical to 343 except Nos. 347-349 missing original ironwork.
- 359 Identical to 341 except painted red and white with white stringcourses, lintels and carved "woodsman" over doorway.

West 122nd Street, South Side: Numbers 342-360

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Architect: Webster & Hammond
Builder: Same
Constructed: June 10, 1889 - July 31, 1890

Bldg# Description

342

Queen Anne (with Romanesque detail), three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone rowhouse with carved and rusticated stringcourses (four per floor evenly spaced). Rectangular doorway surmounted by a flush arched door hood with inset panel depicting mythical "woodsman." Arch supported by paired corbelled diminutive Corinthian columns. Protruding straight lintels supported by carved brackets. Simple sills. Metal cornice with acanthus leaves and two rows of interlocking dentils supported by corbelled diminutive piers. Original stoop, ironwork, and doors. Painted brown.

344

Identical to 342 except rectangular door hood supported by carved brackets in turn supported by paired corbelled diminutive Corinthian columns.

346-358

Identical to 344 except 350-352 missing ironwork and 354 missing stoop.

360

Identical to 342.

West 122nd Street, North Side; Numbers 341-361:

Architect: Mr. J.A. Webster
Builder: Same
Constructed: September 26, 1888 - June 29, 1889

Bldg# Description

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- 341 Queen Anne (with Romanesque detail), three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone rowhouse with stringcourses (one per floor, centered on window openings). Rectangular doorhood supported by carved and elongated brackets. Protruding straight lintels supported by fluted brackets. Intricate metal cornice supported by rectangular brackets. Original stoop, ironwork and doors. painted brown.
- 343-361 Identical to 341 except: 351 missing cornice; 353 fire damaged cornice; 357 damaged ironwork; 359 missing ironwork and stoop.

West 12third Street, South Side: Numbers 344-362:

Architect: Mr. J.H. Valentine
Builder: Same.
Constructed: September 15, 1885 - July 30, 1886

- | Block# | Description |
|--------|--|
| 344 | Neo-Grec, three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone rowhouse. Doorway and windows fully enframed with simple protruding lintels, sills and door hood; all with incised Neo-Grec fluting and incised stylized flowers. Simple cornice supported by rectangular brackets. Original stoop, damaged ironwork and original inner and outer doors. Painted brown. |
| 346 | Identical to 344 except missing newels. |
| 348 | Identical to 344 with original ironwork intact. |
| 350 | Identical to 344 with original ironwork intact. |
| 352 | Identical to 344 with original ironwork intact. Missing cornice. |

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- 354 Identical to 344 with original ironwork intact.
- 356 Identical to 344 with new doors.
- 358 Identical to 344 except missing newels.
- 360 Identical to 344 with original ironwork.
- 362 Identical to 344 except missing original ironwork.

West 12third Street, North Side: Numbers 345-363:

Architect: Mr. Louis Ungrich.
Builder: Same.
Constructed: October 30, 1885 - August 23, 1886.

Bldg#	Description
345-347	A symmetrical pair of Queen Anne, three-story and basement (low stoop), plain front, red brick rowhouses, each having a freestanding peaked gable with a slate mansard roof behind. The arched doorways are surrounded by flush, quoined brownstone as are the arched parlor windows. The third and fourth floors have simple continuous flush brownstone lintels and sills. The two buildings share, at the second floor, an ornate terra cotta panel depicting a Colonial style scollop shell and foliage surrounded by an egg and dart molding. The gables are each surmounted by a terra cotta sunburst. Original stoop and ironwork. Painted red.
349-351	A symmetrical pair of Queen Anne, three-story and basement (low stoop), plain front, red brick rowhouse with slate mansard roofs. The rectangular doorways are surmounted by terra cotta panels depicting intertwined foliage and are, in turn, surmounted by flush quoined brownstone as are the

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rectangular parlor windows. The third and fourth floors have simple continuous flush brownstone lintels and sills. The buildings share with their sister buildings, a brick denticular cornice running just below the fourth floor sills. Original stoops, ironwork and doors with small colonial panels.. painted red.

- 353-355 Identical to 345-347 except 355 has original door.
- 357-359 Identical to 349-351 except 359 missing original door.
- 361-363 Identical to 345-347 except both houses missing stoops. Entrances now on basement level.

West 12third Street, North Side: Numbers 365-373

Architect: Charles E. Baxter
Builder: S.H. Bailey
Constructed: April 25, 1886 - April 30, 1887

Bldg#	Description
365	Neo-Grec, three-story and basement, smooth brownstone rowhouse with four story half bay. Pillared portico and rectangular doorway. Third and fourth floor window surrounds with Neo-Grec fluting. Basement floor with decorative egg-and-dart stringcourses. Metal cornice with acanthus leaves. Original stoop and masonry newels and balusters. Painted brown.
367	Neo-Grec, three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone rowhouse. Fourth floor windows have full surrounds with Neo-Grec fluting. Third floor has a metal bay window spanning the full width of the building. The basement has decorative egg-and-dart stringcourses. Metal cornice with acanthus leaves. Original stoop with masonry newels and balusters and front doors.

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- 369 Identical to 367 except all surface detail other than bay removed. Stoop missing.
- 371 Identical to 369.
- 373 Identical to 367 except missing masonry newels and balusters.

Manhattan Avenue between 120th & 121st Streets: Numbers 481-505

Architect: G. Robinson Jr.
Builder: J.W. & A.A. Teets
Constructed: September 5, 1886 - October 29, 1887

Block#	Description
481	Queen Anne, three-story and basement, plain front smooth brownstone rowhouse. Extended storefront on basement level surmounted at parlor level by a three window, metal bay spanning the full width of the building. Third and fourth floor windows with Neo-Grec full window surrounds. Rectangular entrance on the side at 349 West 120th with protruding door hood supported by square blocks with Romanesque byzantine leafwork. Simple metal cornice with renaissance style garlands. Original stoop on side. Painted brown.
483	Identical to 481 except no storefront or bay. Rectangular door hood supported by blocks with Byzantine leafwork. Original stoop and ironwork. Painted brown.
485	Queen Anne, three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone house. Rectangular doorhood with incised scrolls supported by fluted Ionic pilasters. Parlor window surmounted by raised hood and oversized shell motif. Third floor windows with quoined surrounds and peaked pediments. Fourth floor windows with full Italianate window surrounds. Bracketed metal cornice with Renaissance Revival style garlands. Original stoop and ironwork. Painted brown.

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- 487 Queen Anne, three-story and basement, plain front rowhouse with a peaked gable. First two floors of rusticated brownstone. Upper two floors of red brick. Protruding rectangular door hood supported by corbelled and fluted diminutive Ionic pilasters. All windows with flush quoined brownstone surrounds and simple protruding lintels. Gable supported by two Ionic pilasters running to the third floor sills. Original stoop. Missing ironwork. Painted red.
- 489 Identical to 487.
- 491 Queen Anne, three-story and basement plain front rowhouse. Basement of rusticated brownstone. Rectangular doorway with protruding rectangular door hood supported by simple fluted brownstone pilasters. All windows have full fluted Neo-Grec window surrounds. Bracketed metal cornice with Renaissance Revival style garlands. Original stoop with damaged ironwork. Painted brown.
- 493 Identical to 491 except intact ironwork.
- 495 Identical to 491.
- 497 Identical to 487 except painted brown and vacant.
- 499 Vacant lot (non-contributing).
- 501 Identical to 485.
- 503 Identical to 483 except intact ironwork and original doors.
- 505 Identical to 483 except non-contributing cinderblock garage built on rear yard.

Manhattan Avenue between 121st & 122nd Streets: Numbers 507-527

Architect: J.A. Webster

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Builder: J.W. & A.A. Teets
Constructed September 14, 1887 - October 31, 1888

Bldg# Description

507 Classic Neo-Grec, three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone rowhouse. Windows and doorway with full rectangular surrounds with protruding lintels and hoods. Incised Eastlake motif over door and incised Neo-Grec fluting and stylized flower on parlor window surround. Simple metal cornice on rectangular brackets. Basement storefront intrusion. Original stoop, ironwork, and door. Missing iron newels. Painted brown. Non-contributing concrete block garage built in rear yard.

509-527 Identical to 507 except no storefront or non-contributing garages. 511-519 and 523-527 with fully intact ironwork. 521 missing ironwork.

Manhattan Avenue between 122nd & 123rd Streets: Numbers 529-553

Architect: G. Robinson Jr.
Builder: Same
Constructed: April 17, 1886 - November 30, 1886

Bldg# Description

529 Queen Anne, three-story and basement, plain front, smooth brownstone rowhouse. Doorways and windows are rectangular and have full surrounds with carved spandrels surmounted by concave brownstone pent roofs, carved to resemble shingles. Ornate Neo-Grec style metal cornice on rectangular fluted brackets with sunbursts. Original stoop and ironwork. Missing newels. Non-contributing concrete block garage in rear yard. Painted brown.

531-533 Identical to 529 except no garage. 533 missing all ironwork.

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- | | |
|---------|--|
| 535 | Vacant lot (non-contributing). |
| 537-551 | Identical to 529 except no garage. 537 and 551 missing ironwork. |
| 553 | Identical to 529 with concrete block extension at rear circa 1960 to house private social club. Front of building extended toward curb and altered to accommodate restaurant. Work done 1987-1988. |

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations A B C D E F G

Areas of significance	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
<u>Architecture</u>	<u>1886 - 1896</u>	<u>1886 - 1896</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

_____	Cultural Affiliation
_____	<u>N/A</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

Significant Person	Architect/Builder
<u>N/A</u>	<u>See Section 7 (building list)</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Manhattan Avenue/West 120-123rd Streets Historic District is architecturally significant as an intact enclave of 113 Neo-Grec, Queen Anne and Renaissance style rowhouses completed during the eleven years from 1886-1896 in Harlem. The district is characterized by unbroken streetscapes of rowhouses, which are all three stories with a basement. The intact blocks of houses form a cohesive district distinct from the surrounding tenements and apartment buildings in both scale and quality of construction. This group of 113 houses is representative of the final period of large scale speculative construction of single-family rowhouses for the middle and upper-middle classes. By the end of the Nineteenth century, steadily increasing land prices in fashionable areas, including Harlem, placed even the narrowest rowhouse beyond the means of the middle class and ushered in the continuing era of the apartment building. [1] Retaining an exceptional level of integrity, the district is a remarkable surviving concentration of residential architecture that recalls the rapid late nineteenth century development of Harlem.

[X] see continuation

1. Sarah B. Landau, "The Rowhouse of New York's West Side," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians. (March 1975): p. 30.

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Harlem is an area approximately four miles square, bordered on the north by 155th Street, on the south by 110th Street, on the west by Morningside Park and St Nicholas Avenue, and on the east by the East River. Until its development began in the late 1870s, Harlem was farmland where the estates of some of America's most illustrious Colonial families were located: Delancys, Beekmans, Bleekers, Rikers, Coldens and Hamiltons. The New York & Harlem Railroad ran slow moving trains to lower Manhattan after 1837 and the steamboats of the Sylvan Line made the trip downtown in 30 minutes after 1856; however, service was suspended during the winter months as ice closed portions of the East River. Despite these transportation impediments, Harlem expanded south in the 1860s and was annexed to New York City in 1873.[2] Harlem's development into a middle and upper-middle class suburb took place during the 30 years following its annexation, as the population of Manhattan doubled from 1,478,103 to 3,437,202 residents.[3] This growth in population combined with the steady encroachment of business activity into older residential neighborhoods served to exacerbate an already acute housing shortage. Many descendants of New York's earlier immigrants moved to Harlem to flee the overcrowding and poor sanitation of lower Manhattan.[4]

The first real impetus for the urban development of Harlem was the opening of the Ninth Avenue Elevated Line to 104th Street in 1879 and its extension to 129th Street in 1881. The electrification of Harlem in 1887 and the installation of telephone service in 1888 together provided Harlem with the era's most modern services. These services, combined with grand public planning, dependable transportation, modern utilities, and improved building methods led to speculative boom on the entire West Side. Between 59th Street and 125th Streets, in the area west of 8th Avenue, the number of building permits

2. Gilbert Osofsky, Harlem, the Making of a Getto: Negro New York, 1890-1930. (New York: 1966), p.74

3. Ira Rosenwaike, A Population History of New York. (Syracuse: 1972), p.75.

4. Osofsky, p.75.

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filed with the City of New York increased from 139 in 1881, to a peak of 948 in 1886.[5] This combination of developments coincided with speculative development in the Manhattan Avenue/120th-123rd Streets Historic District. Of critical importance to the development of the district was Morningside Park.

Morningside Park, which was laid out in 1867 and improved from 1886-1887 under the direction of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, helped provide the impetus for the construction of rowhouses in the historic district. During the late nineteenth century, the Morningside Park Association lobbied for the completion of the park and worked to make the surrounding area a "decent" middle and upper-middle class neighborhood. The "Real Estate Record and Guide," April 7, 1886 reported:

Morningside park was opened two years before Riverside Park was made a public resort. It was laid out 15 years ago and \$1 million has been paid out in assessments by property owners who now naturally insist on having the park made what it was intended to be. They feel something should be done for the money they have paid out. They want to see it enclosed with an ornamental railing and improved in such a manner that it will provide an attraction to residents in the vicinity. I understand that 100 houses are projected between 120th and 125th Street this year. The block on 125th from 9th Avenue-St. Nicholas is also to be improved and first rate residences are to be built. The owners have agreed to build exclusively first class property in this neighborhood.

The 100 houses projected in this article are, most likely, those in the historic district. When this article was published in April 1886, the construction of the houses at 344-362 and 345-363 West 123rd Street was well under way; construction of the houses

5. Charles Lookwood, Bricks and Brownstone, The New York Rowhouse, 1783-1929. (New York: 1972), p.245.

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at 365-377 West 123rd Street and 529-553 Manhattan Avenue would begin within a month, and construction on the houses at 481-505 Manhattan Avenue would begin in September. The remaining 64 houses in the district would be constructed during the ensuing ten years.

Today, these houses reflect the succession of styles that dominated urban residential design in the last fifteen years of the Nineteenth century: Neo-Grec, Queen Anne and Renaissance Revival.

The Neo-Grec style, while having many distinctive design elements, was largely an extension of the Italianate style that gained great popularity in America during the 1850's and survived into the early 1870s. While the style retained the smooth brownstone front, boldly protruding cornice, heavy doorway and window details of the Italianate style, these elements, which had previously been curvilinear in form, became rectilinear. Where a bracket had previously mimicked an acanthus leaf from life, it now became highly stylized, with straight edges and incised grooves betraying a logic largely divorced from the natural world. The nation, fascinated with the industrial and engineering capabilities developed during the Civil War, saw such an aesthetic as machine-like, modern and thereby desirable. As with the Italianate style, Neo-Grec houses were built in "ranges" or unbroken blocks of attached houses identical in all respects. The Neo-Grec style is most common in urban residential construction between the years 1875 and 1885. The Neo-Grec houses within the historic district were built as the style was already on the wane.

The Queen Anne style represented a decisive movement away from the formal and highly unified style characteristics of both the Italianate and Neo-Grec styles. The Queen Anne emphasized individuality and the artful use of contrasting materials and asymmetrical massing. It is common to find houses that include brick, stone, pressed metal and terra cotta. Such a combination would have been unthinkable ten years earlier. The freeform nature of the style made possible the combining of ornamentation from previous and contemporaneous styles including Neo-Grec, Romanesque, Byzantine, and Renaissance. Charles Lockwood in Bricks and Brownstones observes:

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Few New York rowhouses, whether brick or brownstone front, completely reflect the Queen Anne style. In American architectural history, the late nineteenth century saw a free mixing of different styles on a single dwelling and a flexibility of forms and ornament within each style. The Queen Anne rowhouse, therefore, often included forms and details of the passing Neo-Grec style and the contemporary Romanesque and Renaissance styles. [6]

Like all architectural styles of the Nineteenth century, Queen Anne was a fashion and, as fashion changes, so the buildings changed. The exuberance with which Queen Anne vanquished the Neo-Grec style was ultimately its undoing. By the early 1890s, the American public had tired of the mixed styles, asymmetrical massing and dark brownstone or brick facades of earlier decades. The World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 and its renowned white Neo-Classical buildings raised the Renaissance style to national prominence. [7] Championed by the leading architects of the day, including McKim, Mead & White, the Renaissance style included a facade of light-colored stone or brick and applied ornament drawn from Greek, Roman and Italian Renaissance architecture and decorative arts.

Although the ten blocks that constitute the historic district are, significant for their integrity, they are not the work of notable architects. These buildings were, in most cases, designed and built by individual real estate speculators listed in city records as both architect and builder. In one case, Mr. G. Robinson is listed in public records as architect on 481-505 Manhattan Avenue, then as architect and builder on 529-553 Manhattan Avenue. Mr. J.A. Webster, who built five of the ten blocks within the district, was architect only on 507-527 Manhattan, but chose to act as both architect and builder on the last four blocks he built on 121st and 122nd streets. By 1880, it

6. Ibid., p.232.

7. Ibid., p.231.

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was common for developers to act as both architect and builder as the construction of New York brownstones had become highly standardized. Architectural design of speculative housing was not an art, but rather an extension of construction technology. With the advent of huge mechanized mills, architectural detail, critical to the marketability of a house, could be ordered complete and to cut size out of a catalogue. Mass production, a product of the Civil War-era technology, was an integral part of the housing industry by the time the houses in the historic district were constructed.

The last houses along 120th Street were completed in 1895 and were, like other houses in the area, occupied as single-family dwellings by Manhattan's early immigrants, including those of English, German or Irish descent. After World War I, the ethnic composition of Harlem began to change. Developers who had built numerous blocks of speculative housing at the turn of the century began to have great difficulty selling and/or renting much of this property. Ultimately, a market was found as developers began renting to Black individuals and families newly arrived from the rural South and those pushed out of the "Tenderloin District" on Manhattan's West Midtown by commercial development. Blacks moved first into the few blocks around 131st Street and 7th Avenue, and by 1932 had become a dominant presence in Harlem. During the late 1920s and 1930s period Harlem became a black metropolis, and the efforts of black writers, poets, actors and musicians created what would later be known as the "Harlem Renaissance".

As Harlem reached its zenith as a center for black life during the Great Depression, the forces behind its material decline were already at work, as Black workers were the last hired during the late 1920s and the first fired during the depression. The high quality housing stock began to suffer from neglect and grand single family houses were, by necessity, partitioned into single room boarding houses. Until the middle 1960s, Harlem remained a stable if not affluent community. After this point and continuing to the present, a complex interrelationship of forces began what would become the rapid destruction of Harlem's rich architectural heritage. The result has been street after street of fine nineteenth century houses vacated, burned out and or demolished.

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In a testament to the value placed on the houses in the Manhattan Avenue/120th-123rd Streets Historic District by the people of Harlem, these houses are (for the most part) occupied and appear from the street to be in an solid state of repair. Numerous decorative features remain, including original ironwork, doors, shutters, and rich carving in stone. In unbroken ranges, these houses provide a cohesive testament to the architectural vision that shaped New York during the last fifteen years of the Nineteenth century.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property _____

UTM References

A	_____	_____	_____	B	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Manhattan Avenue, West 120th - West 123rd Streets Historic District is shown as the solid black line on the accompanying map entitled "Manhattan Avenue, West 120th - West 123rd Streets Historic District."

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The Manhattan Avenue/West 120th-123rd Streets Historic District lies on the western edge of Central Harlem where Morningside Park and its steep wooded bluff separates this purely residential neighborhood from the education and religious institutions and commercial blocks of Morningside Heights. The district is composed of 113 contributing brownstone and brick row houses on the four short blocks between 120th and 123rd Streets bounded by Morningside and Manhattan Avenues. The houses within the historic district form a cohesive group distinct from the surrounding tenements and apartment buildings in both scale and quality of construction. The district boundaries are defined by the concentration of small individual dwelling lots which contrast sharply with the larger surrounding lots of tenements, apartment buildings and, to the north, a hospital now used as a home for the aged. The physical boundaries of the district are emphasized by the scale, density and quality of its homogeneous streetscapes.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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10. UTM REFERENCES

A.	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B.	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C.	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D.	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E.	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F.	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G.	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H.	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

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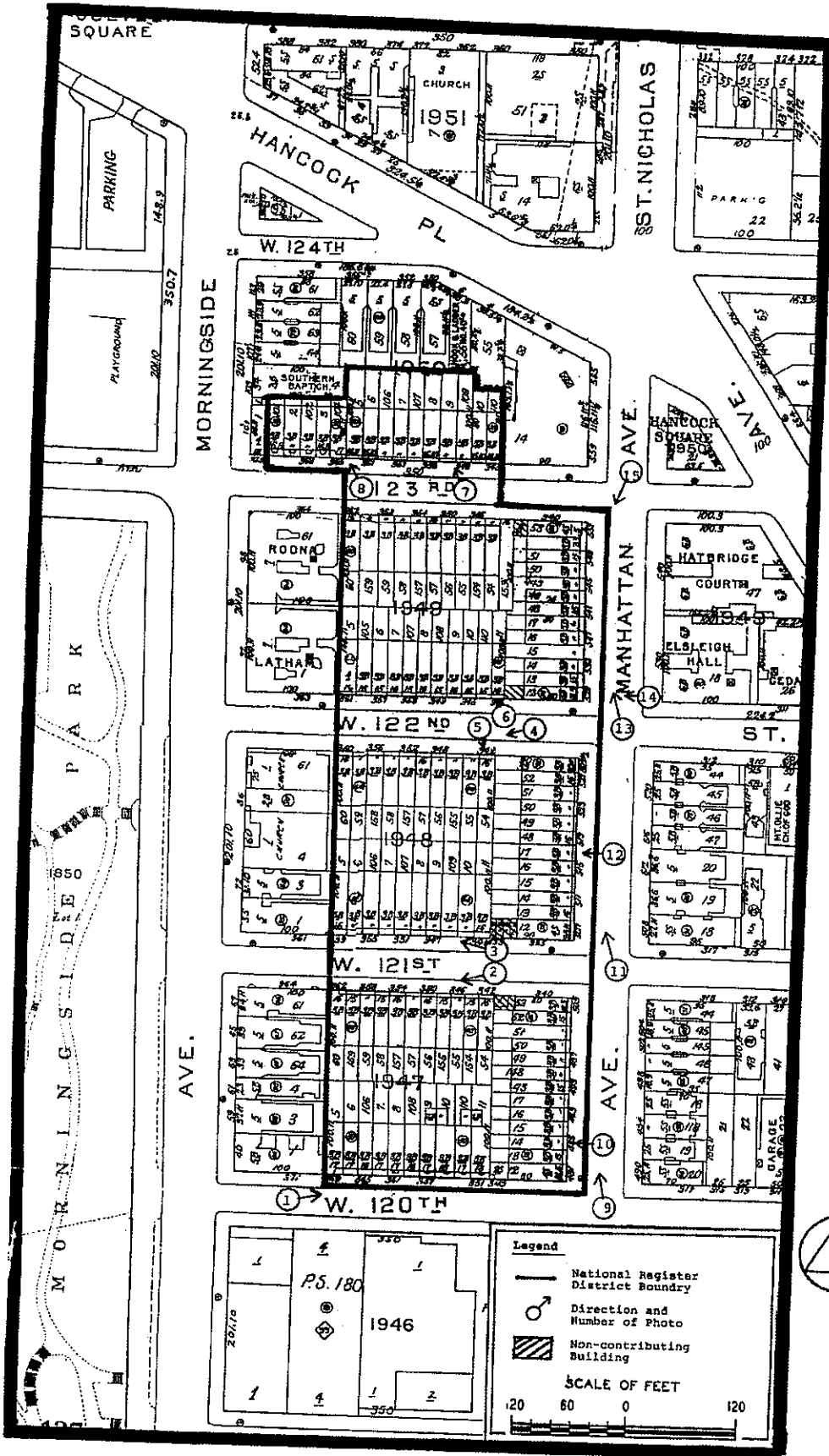
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MANHATTAN AVENUE-W.120TH-W.123RD STREETS
HISTORIC DISTRICT



Map of Hudson River Water Street
 Hudson Street
 Central Park Quad
 Scale 1:24,000

A	4577980
B	4577940
C	4577920
D	4577900
E	4577880
F	4577860
G	4577840
H	4577820
I	4577800

