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Landmarks Preservation Commission
November 17, 1987; Designation List 196
LP-1340

HUDSON THEATER, 139-141 West 44th Street, Manhattan. Built 1902-04; architects J.B. McElfattrick & Son and Israels & Harder.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 997, Lot 15.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Hudson Theater and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 36). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty-two witnesses spoke or read statements into the record in favor of designation. One witness spoke in opposition to designation. The then owner, with his representatives, appeared at the hearing, and indicated that he had not formulated an opinion regarding designation. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Hudson Theater survives today as one of the historic playhouses that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built in 1902-04, the Hudson was part of a burst in theater construction that shaped the character of Times Square as the new heart of New York's theater district. It survives today as one of the very few turn-of-the-century theaters in the Broadway/Times Square area.

The Hudson was built for Henry B. Harris, one of the era's top Broadway producers. Harris, who grew up in Boston, worked in theaters in Boston and on the road, managing such stars as Lilly Langtry. His many production successes enable him to come to New York in 1900, where he built the Hudson to showcase his stars and productions. Harris's theatrical career, which led to the construction of another of Broadway's handsomest theaters, the Folies Bergere (later the Helen Hayes, demolished), was cut short by his untimely death on the Titanic. The Hudson survives as the chief monument to his theatrical career.

Begun by theater specialists J.B. McElfattrick & Son, the Hudson's design was completed by Israels & Harder, an active New York architectural firm. Its major facade on West 44th Street is a restrained but handsome design reflecting the Beaux-Arts classicism current in New York architecture at the turn of the century.

For three-quarters of a century, beginning with Henry B. Harris's productions, the Hudson Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The development of the Broadway Theater District

The area of midtown Manhattan known today as the Broadway theater district encompasses the largest concentration of legitimate playhouses in the world. The theaters located there, some dating from the turn of the century, are significant for their contributions to the history of the New York stage, for their influence upon American theater as a whole, and in many cases for their architectural design.

The development of the area around Times Square as New York's theater district at the end of the 19th century occurred as a result of two related factors: the northward movement of the population of Manhattan Island (abetted by the growth of several forms of mass transportation), and the expansion of New York's role in American theater. The northward movement of Manhattan's residential, commercial, and entertainment districts had been occurring at a steady rate throughout the 19th century. In the early 1800s, businesses, stores, hotels, and places of amusement had clustered together in the vicinity of lower Broadway. As New York's various businesses moved north, they began to isolate themselves in more or less separate areas: the financial institutions remained downtown; the major retail stores situated themselves on Broadway between 14th and 23rd Streets, eventually moving to Herald Square and Fifth Avenue after the turn of the century; the hotels, originally located near the stores and theaters, began to congregate around major transportation centers such as Grand Central Terminal or on the newly fashionable Fifth Avenue; while the mansions of the wealthy spread farther north on Fifth Avenue, as did such objects of their beneficence as the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹

The theater district, which had existed in the midst of stores, hotels, and other businesses along lower Broadway for most of the 19th century, spread northward in stages, stopping for a time at Union Square, then Madison Square, then Herald Square. By the last two decades of the 19th century, far-sighted theater managers had begun to extend the theater district even farther north along Broadway, until they had reached the area that was then known as Long Acre Square and is today called Times Square.

A district of farmlands and rural summer homes in the early 1800s, Long Acre Square had by the turn of the century evolved into a hub of mass transportation. A horsecar line had run across 42nd Street as early as the 1860s, and in 1871, with the opening of Grand Central Depot and the completion of the Third and Sixth Avenue Elevated Railways, it was comparatively simple for both New Yorkers and out-of-towners to reach Long Acre Square. Transportation continued to play a large part in the development of the area; in 1904 New York's subway system was inaugurated, with a major station located at 42nd Street and Broadway. The area was then renamed Times Square in honor of the newly erected Times Building.² The evolution of the Times Square area as a center of Manhattan's various mass transit systems made it a natural choice for the location of legitimate playhouses, which needed to be easily accessible to their audiences.

The theater business that invaded Long Acre Square at the end of the 19th century consisted of far more than a few playhouses, for at that time New York was the starting-point for a vast, nationwide entertainment network known as "the road." This complex theater operation had its

beginnings in the 1860s when the traditional method of running a theater, the stock system, was challenged by the growing popularity of touring "combination" shows. In contrast to the stock system, in which a theater manager engaged a company of actors for a season and presented them in a variety of plays, the combination system consisted of a company of actors appearing in a single show which toured from city to city, providing its own scenery, costumes, and sometimes musical accompaniment. Helped by the expansion of the nation's railroads after the Civil War,³ the combination system soon killed off the majority of stock companies. By 1904 there were some 420 combination companies touring through thousands of theaters in cities and towns across the country.⁴

Of crucial importance to the operation of the combination system was a single location where combination shows could be cast, rehearsed, tried out, and then booked for a cross-country tour. Since New York was already regarded as the most important theater city in America, it is not surprising that it became the headquarters for the combination system. In addition to the many theaters needed for an initial Broadway production for the combinations before they went on tour, New York's theater district encompassed rehearsal halls, the headquarters of scenery, costume, lighting, and makeup companies, offices of theatrical agents and producers, theatrical printers and newspapers, and other auxiliary enterprises. Close to the theater district were boarding houses catering to the hundreds of performers who came to New York in the hope of being hired for a touring show or a Broadway production.

As theaters were built farther uptown, the auxiliary enterprises also began to move north. By the turn of the century,

the section of Broadway between 37th Street and 42nd Street was known as the Rialto. Theater people gathered or promenaded there. Producers could sometimes cast a play by looking over the actors loitering on the Rialto; and out-of-town managers, gazing out of office windows, could book tours by seeing who was available.⁵

The theater district that began to move north to Long Acre Square in the 1890s was thus a vast array of business enterprises devoted to every facet of theatrical production.

The movement of the theater district north along Broadway had proceeded at a steady pace during the latter part of the 19th century. The Casino Theater was opened on the southeast corner of Broadway and 39th Street in 1882. A year later, it was joined by a most ambitious undertaking--the construction of the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway between 39th and 40th Streets. In 1888, the Broadway Theater was erected on the southwest corner of Broadway and 41st Street. Five years later, the American Theater opened its doors at Eighth Avenue between 41st and 42nd Streets, as did Abbey's Theater at Broadway and 38th Street and the Empire Theater at Broadway and Fortieth Street.

It remained for Oscar Hammerstein I to make the move into Long Acre Square itself. At the close of the 19th century, Long Acre Square housed Manhattan's harness and carriage businesses, but was little used at night, when it seems to have become a "thieves' lair."⁶ In 1895 Hammerstein

erected an enormous theater building on Broadway between 44th and 45th Streets. The original plan for the Olympia called for a "perfect palace of entertainment--which would have included three theaters, a bowling alley, a turkish bath, cafes and restaurants."⁷ Only part of this visionary plan ever became a reality. On November 25, 1895, Hammerstein opened the Lyric Theater section of the building, and a little over three weeks later he inaugurated the Music Hall section. Never a financial success, the Olympia closed its doors two years after it opened. Nevertheless, it earned Hammerstein the title of "Father of Times Square."

By the turn of the century Hammerstein had built two more theaters in the Long Acre Square area, and in the years 1901-1920 a total of forty-three additional theaters appeared in midtown Manhattan, most of them in the side streets east and west of Broadway. Much of this theater-building activity was inspired by the competition between two major forces in the industry, the Theatrical Syndicate and the Shubert Brothers, for control of the road. As each side in the rivalry drew its net more tightly around the playhouses it owned or controlled, the other side was forced to build new theaters to house its attractions. The result was a dramatic increase in the number of playhouses, both in New York and across the country. After World War I, as the road declined and New York's theatrical activity increased, the general economic prosperity made possible the construction of thirty additional playhouses in the Times Square area, expanding the boundaries of the theater district so that it stretched from just west of Eighth Avenue to Sixth Avenue, and from 39th Street to Columbus Circle.⁸

The stockmarket crash of 1929 and the resulting Depression caused a shrinkage in theater activity. Some playhouses were torn down, many were converted to motion picture houses, and later to radio and television studios. From the time of the Depression until the 1960s no new Broadway playhouses were constructed. Fortunately, the theaters that survive from the early part of the century represent a cross-section of types and styles, and share among them a good deal of New York's rich theatrical history.

(MMK)

Evolution of Theater Design

The frenzy of theater construction that occurred in New York during the first thirty years of this century brought with it an evolution in architecture and decoration.⁹ At the close of the 19th century American theaters were still being built in the style of traditional European opera houses, with high proscenium arches, narrow auditoriums, two or three balconies built in a horseshoe configuration, and dozens of boxes, some set into the front of the first balcony. Although contemporary notices of the theaters attributed specific (though often vague) styles or periods to them, their interiors were more often than not a melange of styles and colors.

With the increase of theater construction after the turn of the century came a new attitude toward theater architecture and decoration as firms such as Herts and Tallant, Thomas W. Lamb, and others, began to plan the playhouse's exterior and interior as a single, integrated design. The Art Nouveau style New Amsterdam Theater, which opened in 1903, signalled this new seriousness in theater design.

Perhaps influenced by such European experiments as Wagner's Festival Theater at Bayreuth, American theater architects after the turn of the century began to structure their playhouses along different lines. Proscenium openings were made lower and wider, auditoriums were made shallower, seating was planned in a fan shape, and the number of balconies was usually reduced to one. Boxes were cut back to a minimum. The theaters that were built just before and after World War I for the most part shared this new configuration.

Because many of New York's extant playhouses were built during the period in which New York was serving as the starting-point for nationwide tours, they represent a style of theater architecture that is characteristic not only of New York but also of other cities across the United States, for a show which was originally produced in a New York theater would require similar conditions in the theaters in which it toured, and theater owners often hired the same architects to design and build theaters in several cities. Thus, New York's theaters set the standard for theater construction across the United States, as an inspection of designs for theaters in various cities will show.¹⁰

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The Broadway Theater in American Theatrical History

The playhouses still standing in the Broadway theater district share among them over eighty years of American theatrical history. In the early years of the century, when American theater was still heavily influenced by Europe, the theaters played host to such great international stars as Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and to adaptations of such European successes as The Merry Widow and Floradora.

It was in the Broadway theaters that the beginnings of a distinctly American drama could be seen in the Western melodramas of David Belasco, the social comedies of Clyde Fitch and Langdon Mitchell, and the problem plays of Edward Sheldon and Eugene Walter. With the rise of the "little theater" movement in the second decade of the century, it seemed that theatrical leadership had passed from Broadway to such experimental "art" theaters as the Provincetown Playhouse and the Neighborhood Playhouse. Before long, however, the innovations of the little theaters infused Broadway with new life. Beginning with the production of Eugene O'Neill's first full-length play, Beyond the Horizon, on Broadway in 1920, the playhouses of Broadway presented the work of a new generation of playwrights, including, in addition to O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Philip Barry, S.N. Behrman, Rachel Crothers, Sidney Howard, George S. Kaufman, George Kelly and Elmer Rice.

The Depression of the 1930s brought with it a new concern with political and social issues, and the dramas presented in the Broadway playhouses reflected that concern. Commercial producers gave us plays by Lillian Hellman, Robert E. Sherwood, and Thornton Wilder, while the Group Theater and other new organizations introduced such writers as Clifford Odets and Sidney Kingsley. The Broadway theaters continued to house challenging plays during the 1940s and 1950s, when new talents such as

Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge first began writing for the theater.

Meanwhile, musical comedy had blossomed from the adaptations and imitations of European operetta popular at the turn of the century to a uniquely American art form. By the 1940s and 1950s the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and many others, were being exported from the stages of Broadway to theaters around the world.

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of ferment and change, both in and out of the theater. As in the 1920s, the impetus for theatrical experimentation came from outside of Broadway, and as in the 1920s, the experimentation helped to revitalize the Broadway theater. Today, the playhouses of Broadway are showcases for the best plays of the Off- and Off-Off Broadway theaters, as well as for exciting productions from theatrical workshops, regional theaters, and outstanding foreign companies.

Having moved gradually northward all during the 19th century, New York's theater district finally came to rest at Times Square, where it has remained for almost ninety years. The economic Depression of the 1930s discouraged speculative ventures such as the construction of new theaters, while after prosperity returned in the wake of World War II, the cost of renting land and constructing a theater was prohibitively high. The northward movement of the theater district may also have been discouraged for a number of years by the existence of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway, which crossed from Sixth to Ninth Avenues at 53rd Street, thereby providing a natural northern boundary for the theater district.¹¹

The Hudson Theater, as one of the Broadway theaters surviving today in the theater district, contributes to the totality of the district's history by virtue of its participation in that history.

(MMK)

Notes

1. The discussion of the northward movement of Manhattan's business and theaters is based on Mary Henderson, The City and the Theatre (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White and Co., 1973), pp. 130-131, 168-170.
2. W.G. Rogers and Mildred Weston, Carnival Crossroads: the Story of Times Square (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 39-78; Howard B. Furer, New York: A Chronological and Documentary History 1524-1970 (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1974), p. 34 ff.; The New York Subway (New York: Interborough Rapid Transit Co., 1904; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, n.d.).
3. Alfred L. Bernheim, The Business of the Theatre (New York: Actors Equity Association, 1932; reprint ed., New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 26.
4. Jack Poggi, Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 6.

5. Brooks Atkinson, Broadway, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 11.
6. Philip Paneth, Times Square, Crossroads of the World (New York: Living Books, 1965), p. 20.
7. Henderson, p. 263.
8. Henderson, p. 195-196.
9. The discussion of the developments in American theater architecture is based upon: Ned A. Bowman, "American Theatre Architecture: the Concrete Mirror Held Up to Yankee Nature," The American Theatre: The Sum of its Parts (New York: French, 1972), pp. 199-233; Burr C. Cook, "Twenty Years of Theatre Building," Theatre, 36 (August 1922), 98-99; Arthur S. Meloy, Theatres and Picture Houses (New York: Architects' Supply and Publishing Co., 1916), p. 29.
10. See, for example, the discussion of various theaters in Randolph Williams Sexton and Ben Franklin Betts, eds., American Theaters of Today, 2 vols. (New York: Architectural Book Pubs., 1927, 1930; reprint ed., New York: Vestal, 1977).
11. Stanley Buder, "Forty-Second Street at the Crossroads: A History of Broadway to Eighth Avenue," West 42nd Street: "The Bright Light Zone" (New York: Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 1978), p. 62.

Henry B. Harris

Henry B. Harris, an important figure in theatrical circles during the first decade of the 20th century, owned three Broadway theaters and had controlling interest in a number of road companies.

Harris was born in St. Louis to a theatrical family in 1866. His father William Harris worked as a theatrical manager and producer and would later be associated with the Klaw & Erlanger syndicate.¹

The Harris family moved to Boston when Henry was still a boy. His first theatrical job was at the Howard Athenaeum, a venerable Boston theater whose history dated back to the 1840s.² Harris later found employment with Rich and Harris, a prominent theatrical management firm. While under the firm's employ, he managed the road tours of a number of important stars, most notably Lillie Langtry. In 1900 Harris produced a play, The Climbers, the success of which helped him move to New York and launch what was to be a highly successful career on Broadway.

Among his early productions were Soldiers of Fortune, The Traveling Salesman, and The Third Degree. He was also responsible for launching the career of Robert Edeson, a top Broadway star. In 1902 Harris began construction of the Hudson Theater, with the intention of making it the permanent New York home for the actors under his management.

In 1906, Harris acquired the Hackett Theater (originally the Lew M. Fields Theater, built for Oscar Hammerstein at 254 West 42nd Street) for a reported \$400,000.³ Harris presented one of his most successful plays there, The Lion and the Mouse. So successful was it that during one season the play was being presented by four road companies simultaneously. William Harris, Henry's younger brother, was the manager of the theater. The Hackett was renamed the Harris in 1911.⁴

Harris's third theater was the Folies Bergere at 210 West 46th Street, designed for him by architects Herts & Tallant and built 1910-11. The Folies was planned as a combination music hall and restaurant, with moveable dinner tables in the orchestra and box circle area. (The balcony and grand circle had seats for those who came only to see the show.) This highly innovative idea proved unsuccessful with the theater-going public and failed in less than six months. The Folies was renamed the Fulton and reopened as a legitimate playhouse.⁵

Harris was president of the Henry B. Harris Company, with offices in the Hudson Theater. He managed a number of touring companies and several major stars. During one season alone he had sixteen separate companies on tour.

In 1912, Harris and his wife toured Europe, returning via the White Star liner Titanic. Harris's wife survived the disaster, but Harris drowned. The New York newspapers listed him among the most prominent passengers on board:

He was liked by everyone, he was independent in his ideas, and he had organized his business into a system that appears capable of moving indefinitely with its own momentum.⁶

The Harris theaters were closed for one night in mourning. Harris died at the peak of his relatively short but highly successful career and was spared the fate of many of his contemporaries, who saw their theatrical empires ruined by the Depression.

(WS)

Notes

1. Henry B. Harris, obituary, New York Times, April 16, 1912.
2. For the Howard Atheneum see Constance Greiff, Lost America (Princeton: The Pyne Press, 1971), p. 204.
3. "Harris Buys the Hudson," New York Times, April 2, 1908.
4. Walter Rigdon, ed., The Biographical Encyclopaedia and Who's Who of The American Theater (New York: James H. Heineman Inc., 1966), p. 958.
5. Later known as the Helen Hayes Theater; it was demolished in 1982.
6. "Concerning Mr. Harris," The New York Times, April 21, 1912.

The Architects: McElfattrick & Son and Israels & Harder

Henry Harris initially hired the renowned firm of J.B. McElfattrick & Son to design his Hudson Theater. Although the firm did make initial drawings in 1902, by January 1903 the project had been taken over, for unknown reasons, by the firm of Israels & Harder.

J.B. McElfattrick & Son specialized in theater architecture, designing over 200 theaters in over 90 cities around the country.¹ The Hudson was one of sixty New York commissions the firm received, but one of only two theaters connected with their name that survive today in the Broadway theater district.

John B. McElfattrick was born in Middletown, Pennsylvania, in 1828. As a young man he moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, pursuing the career of a carpenter and architect.² As McElfattrick's practice grew with such commissions as the Grand Opera House in Detroit and the National Theater in Washington, he and his sons John M. and William H. McElfattrick, who became his partners, moved to Louisville, Kentucky, St. Louis, and finally, in 1884, to New York City.³ The firm's first known New York commission was the Broadway Theater at Broadway and 41st Street (demolished). Completed in 1888, the Broadway was one of the few older theaters close enough to Longacre Square to become part of the Times Square/Broadway theater district after the turn of the century. The Broadway combined a theater with offices, and its facade was that of a Victorian office building.

McElfattrick & Son went on to design some of the most important of the Broadway theaters. In 1892 the firm handled the commission for the Empire Theater on West 41st Street, and the adjoining three-story office building for the legendary showman Charles Frohman. Boasting a one-hundred foot lobby, improved fireproof construction, and electrical lighting with an alternate gas system, the Empire was among Broadway's best-known theaters.⁴ Before its thorough renovation in 1903, the Empire's interior was a typical late-19th-century horseshoe configuration with columns supporting two balconies. Paired boxes on each level flanked a high proscenium arch.

In 1892-93 McElfattrick & Son designed Oscar Hammerstein's first Manhattan Opera House on 34th Street between Broadway and Seventh Avenue, and Abbey's Theater at Broadway and 38th Street. In 1895 the firm landed one of Oscar Hammerstein's most extravagant commissions: the Olympia, occupying the entire blockfront along the east side of Broadway between West 44th and 45th Streets, in Times Square. Envisioned as a palace of entertainment, the Olympia was to have included two theaters -- the Music Hall and the Lyric -- as well as a roof garden, a bowling alley, cafes, and restaurants.⁵ The firm's design for the facade of this complex was extraordinarily exuberant, and strongly suggestive of Stanford White's design for the recently opened Madison Square Garden.

Although the Olympia failed as an enterprise, closing after only two years, Hammerstein continued to commission theaters from McElfattrick & Son. In 1899 Hammerstein built the Victoria theater at 42nd Street and Seventh Avenue, and in 1900 the adjoining Republic Theater. The roofs of the two theaters were joined to create the Paradise Roof Garden.⁶ McElfattrick & Son's final Hammerstein commissions were the Lew M. Fields Theater on 42nd

Street (1904), the Lexington Opera House, and the Metropolitan Opera House in Philadelphia (1908).

The Hudson was one of McElfatrick & Son's few theater commissions in or near Times Square not connected to Hammerstein. Other New York theaters by the firm included the Harlem Auditorium at 126th Street and Seventh Avenue (1903), the Fordham and Bronx Theaters in the Bronx, and a number of vaudeville houses in Brooklyn. John McElfatrick died in 1906, but his son William continued the firm until his death in 1922.⁷ His last known commission was in 1921.

The firm of Israels & Harder was formed by Charles Henry Israels (1865-1911) and Julius F. Harder (1865/66-1930). Israels, born in New York City, was educated at Irving Institute, Tarrytown, N.Y., the Art Students League, and in France. He had established a New York City architectural practice by 1889, and joined Harder and Augustus L.C. Marsh in the firm of Marsh, Israels, & Harder in 1894-96; in 1897 the firm became Israels & Harder.⁸

Israels wrote a number of architectural articles, including "New York Apartment Houses" and "Socialism and the Architect."⁹ In 1907 he was a member of the Building Code Revision Commission. At the time of his death Israels was secretary of the Municipal Art Society and a member of the Executive Committee of the Architectural League of New York.

Israels & Harder's work seems to have included mostly apartment houses, hotels (including the Devon, Walton, Warrington, and Arlington), and commercial buildings, as well as the Turn Verein (1899, 1251-1261 Lexington Avenue, demolished). Israels designed a number of rowhouses in the blocks off Riverside Drive.¹⁰ The Hudson Theater is their only known theater commission.

The mid-course change in architects led to some confusion in the contemporary architectural press concerning credit for the Hudson's design. McElfatrick & Son was a prominent firm specializing in theater design, while Israels & Harder designed no other known theater, and some of the first press accounts attributed the design of the completed theater to McElfatrick. Nevertheless, the plans on file at the New York Buildings Department are signed by Israels & Harder, and the later press accounts credit that firm, suggesting that the information being made available to the press had been updated.¹¹ Moreover, the Hudson bears little similarity to other theaters designed by McElfatrick & Son. That firm's approach to theaters was formed in the 19th century, and even in the 20th century their theaters retained much of the typical 19th-century theater configuration. Long after cantilevered balcony construction had come into common use, McElfatrick was still employing support columns under balconies.¹² The fact that the Hudson Theater's balconies are cantilevered is further evidence that McElfatrick was not the architect, and that credit for the final design belongs to Israels & Harder.

(WS, AR)

Notes

1. William Craig Morrison, "J.B. McElfatrick & Son," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects (New York: The Free Press, 1982), p. 135.
2. Ibid.
3. The firm of J.B. McElfatrick & Sons is first listed in New York in 1884, according to Dennis Steadman Francis, Architects in Practice New York City 1840-1900 (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, Inc., 1979), p. 53.
4. William Eppes, "The Empire Theater," Marquee, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Third quarter, 1978), pp. 4-6.
5. Morrison, p. 135.
6. Mary Henderson, The City and the Theater: New York Playhouses from Bowling Green to Times Square (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White Co., 1973), p. 279.
7. William McElfatrick, obituary, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, September 29, 1922.
8. Information on Israels & Harder is based on: Charles Israels, obituary, American Architect and Building News 100 (Dec. 6, 1911), 4; Charles Israels, obituary, Real Estate Record and Guide, 88 (November 18, 1911), 154; Charles Israels, obituary, American Institute of Architects Quarterly Bulletin (December 1911), pp. 298-299; "Charles Henry Israels," Who's Who in New York City and State (New York: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1911), p. 513; Julius Harder, obituary, New York Times, November 22, 1930, p.17, col. 3.
9. Charles H. Israels, "New York Apartment Houses," Architectural Record, 11 (July 1901), 477-508; Charles H. Israels, "Socialism and the Architect," Architectural Record, 17 (April 1905), 329-335.
10. Now part of the Riverside Drive-West 80th-81st Street Historic District.
11. The original permit, filed on March 25th, 1902, named McElfatrick & Son as the architect. A schedule of structural members and a plan for fire-escapes are the only McElfatrick plans on file at the Building Department; all the rest of the Hudson plans are labeled "Revised by Israels & Harder," and stamped "Received JAN 7, 1903." The Theatre Magazine in August 1903 identified the architect as J.B. McElfatrick & Son ("New York's Magnificent New Playhouses," The Theatre Magazine, August 1903, pp. 193-194), and the Architectural Record in January 1904 repeated the attribution (A.C. David, "The New Theatres of New York," Architectural Record 16 (January 1904), pp. 51-52). The following month, however, the Architects' and Builders' Magazine credited Israels & Harder ("The Hudson Theater," Architects' and Builders' Magazine, 36 (February 1904), 199-209.), suggesting that a correction had been made in information being circulated to the press.

12. Morrison, p. 135.

The Hudson Theater

The Hudson opened in late 1903 as part of a small explosion of theater building in the newly developing Broadway/Times Square theater district.¹ It was one of five new theaters off Times Square, the other four being the New Lyceum (now the Lyceum), the Lyric, the New Amsterdam, and the Liberty. Besides these, at the extreme edges of the theater district, the Drury Lane (demolished) on 34th Street and the Majestic (demolished) on Columbus Circle were being built. On 42nd Street David Belasco had leased Hammerstein's Republic Theater (built in 1899) and remodeled it as the Belasco Theater (today the Victory), while elsewhere the Empire (demolished) and the New York (originally Hammerstein's Olympia; demolished) were also being refurbished.² The Hudson survives today, with the Lyceum, Lyric, New Amsterdam, Liberty, and Victory, as part of this nucleus of original turn-of-the-century legitimate theaters in the Broadway/Times Square theater district.

The explosion in theater construction was much commented on in the architectural press, as well as in the real-estate press and the theatrical world. Notice was taken not only of the numbers, but also of the architectural quality of the buildings, and the consensus was that the new crop of theaters, as well as the renovations of the older ones, showed much higher aesthetic standards:

...all of these new buildings...present both a braver and better appearance to the public than had been the case with the theatres previously erected. ...the truth of this statement is illustrated as much by the reformation, which has been effected in some of the older theatres, as by the character of the new designs. ...the total effect of the new theatrical architecture has been not only to give the public a number of interesting interiors which they can observe and discuss between the acts, but also to establish a standard of playhouse design, which will have its effect hereafter.³

These new theaters have three characteristics which, taken together, put them in a different class from the old theatres. Their location is unexceptional; their excellent planning and ventilation means a great deal for the public comfort, and they show an enormous advance over the earlier New York theatres in good looks. The places of amusement which were built in New York between 1895 and 1901 were both, so far as the interior and so far as the exterior are concerned, exceedingly unattractive, and the general advance shown in the new theatres indicates plainly the improved standards of public taste.⁴

Henry Harris built the Hudson Theater "to be the permanent New York home of his stars,"⁵ his productions, and his offices. Although

technically the theater's owner was George G. Heye, Harris was the moving force behind it, an arrangement not uncommon in the theater district (in 1908, Harris bought the Hudson outright from Heye.⁶) The Hudson was to be Harris's professional symbol, and he supervised its construction, devoting a great deal of care to its design.

The Hudson's lavish interior received the most enthusiastic praise of the critics. Its exterior was treated in a more restrained but nevertheless quite handsome version of the Beaux-Arts classical style, "simple and dignified" in the words of a contemporary architectural critic.⁷ Four stories high by five bays wide, its simple arrangement centers on a slightly projecting pavilion formed by the three inner bays, while horizontally the facade is organized as a base, two-story flat portico, and attic story topped by a balustrade. The base is rusticated; the double-story portico is formed by four pilasters supporting an architrave. The simple arrangement is enhanced by carefully placed ornament. Although the original marquee over the central entrance does not survive, each side entrance is topped by a lintel, supported on console brackets, atop which rests a handsomely carved double cornucopia; the curve of each cornucopia matches the curve of an oval window set directly above. The three central windows at the second story are framed in handsome surrounds; those to the right and left of center have segmental pediments but that over the central window has a broken triangular pediment with an inset high-relief lyre, as well as a carved head and wreaths in the frieze below. Medusa-head capitals enliven the four double-story pilasters, while projecting from the architrave is a panel inscribed with the name "HUDSON." The balustrade at the top is adorned with an elaborate cartouche.

The Hudson served admirably as Harris's headquarters for the remaining few years of his short career. After Harris's tragic death, the Hudson went on to a distinguished career as a Broadway theater.

(AR)

Notes

1. Although the Hudson opened in late 1903, the Buildings Department did not sign off on the permit until July 1904.
2. "New York's Magnificent New Playhouses," The Theatre Magazine, August 1903, pp. 193-4; A.C. David, "The New Theatres of New York," Architectural Record, 16 (Jan 1904), pp. 39-54; "Of Interest to the Building Trades," New York Real Estate Record and Guide, July 4, 1903, p.11.
3. David, p. 42. See also "New York's Magnificent New Playhouses."
4. [These New Theatres], Real Estate Record and Guide, 72 (October 31, 1903), 773.
5. "Harris Buys the Hudson," New York Times, April 2, 1908.
6. Ibid. Heye is also named as the owner in the building permit: see New York City, Buildings Department, Manhattan, New Building Permit 150-1902.

7. David, p.54.

The Hudson as a Playhouse¹

The Hudson Theater was to "be devoted chiefly to drawing-room comedy";² its opening production, on October 19, 1903, starred Ethel Barrymore in Cousin Kate, a recent success on the London stage.³

Barrymore returned to the Hudson in 1904 starring in Thomas Raceward's Sunday; in this play she uttered her famous lines, "That's all there is, there isn't anymore...." During the 1905-06 season Bernard Shaw's Man and Superman was performed, with Richard Bennett in the leading role. This was the first time that Shaw had allowed one of his plays to be performed in a version different from the way he had actually written it. In 1908 Ethel Barrymore starred in W. Somerset Maugham's Lady Frederick.

After the death of Harris in 1912, his widow continued to produce plays at the Hudson. In 1915, Oscar Wilde's Lady Windermere's Fan was performed. A successful production of 1920 was Booth Tarkington's Clarence with Mary Boland, Helen Hayes, and Alfred Lunt. George M. Cohan presented and starred in several productions at the Hudson including The Song and Dance Man in 1924. American Born in 1925, and Whispering Friends in 1928. In 1929 several black musicals were presented, Messin Around and Hot Chocolates.

Mrs. Harris was reportedly offered \$1.2 million for the theater in the late 1920s to provide a site for an office building. She refused, only to lose the theater during the Depression.⁴

In 1934, the Columbia Broadcasting System leased the theater for use as the CBS Radio Playhouse.⁵ At that time the first floor boxes were removed to make room for an announcer's booth and a commercial booth.

In 1937 the theater was again named the Hudson and returned to legitimate stage productions. Lena Horne and Sammy Fain appeared in Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1939. The Hudson had one of its longest runs from 1943 to 1944 with Arsenic and Old Lace. During the run of this play the theater was purchased by Lindsay & Crouse. These authors' play, State of the Union, won the Pulitzer Prize for 1946. The 1949-50 season brought Sidney Kingsley's Detective Story with Lee Grant and Maureen Stapleton.

In 1950 the theater was converted into a television studio. Both the Jack Paar and Steve Allen shows were televised there. Steve Allen's Man on the Street interviews took place directly outside of the 45th Street stage door. The theater was used for television until 1959.

From 1959 until 1965, the building was again used as a legitimate theater. Lillian Hellman's Toys in the Attic with Jason Robards, Maureen Stapleton, and Irene Worth won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Eugene O'Neill's Strange Interlude with Geraldine Page, Ben Gazzara, and Jane Fonda was the last production at the Hudson before the theater went dark in 1963. It reopened in 1965 with Ann Corio's This was Burlesque which played the theater 125 times before going on national tour.

Since 1965 the theater has had several owners and has been operated as a burlesque house, legitimate theater (during the 1967-68 season) and movie house.⁶ In 1981 the theater was renamed the Savoy, and converted to a dinner theater featuring live performers including James Taylor, Peter Allen, and Miles Davis. The Hudson is not currently in theatrical use.

(WS, GH)

Notes

1. This production history of the Hudson Theater, condensed from the fuller version in the Appendix, is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Landmarks Commission staff against George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of the "Stage Today," 1941-43, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; The Best Plays of...[annual] (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1899-present); Theatre World [annual] Daniel Blum, editor (New York: Theatre World, 1946-present), The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heinman, Inc., 1966); Edwin Bronner, The Encyclopedia of American Theater, 1900-1975 (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980); Gerald Bordman, Oxford Companion to American Theatre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).
2. "New York's Magnificent New Playhouses," The Theatre Magazine, August 1903, p.194.
3. "At the Theatres," New York Dramatic Mirror, October 31, 1903, p.16.
4. Mrs. Henry Harris, obituary, Variety, September 10, 1969.
5. "New Radio Theatre is Dedicated Here," New York Times, February 4, 1934, p. 18.
6. "Hudson Turns to Burlesque," Daily News, December 16, 1965; "Hudson Reopens as Film House," New York Times, September 3, 1975, p. 18.

Description¹

The Hudson Theater extends through the block from 44th Street to 45th Street; the principal facade is on 44th Street. The symmetrically organized design is somewhat higher than it is wide, in keeping with the domestic scale of the area at the time of its construction. The base is of rusticated limestone set on a granite water table. Doorways, filled with wood and glass doors, are at each side. Modern security gates have been installed on the west doorway. Each opening is surmounted by a cornice carried on consoles which in turn carry cornucopias surrounding the base of a bulls-eye opening. Centered on the base is a large entrance opening

currently covered by a modern security gate. The marquee above is suspended from tie-rods hung from the original metal fasteners on the wall above. A dentilled molding and wide bandcourse terminate the base and set off the major portion of the facade, which is of brick, now painted buff. This takes the form of a central slightly projecting three-bay pavilion, flanked by single bays. The central bays at the second and third stories are flanked by pilasters terminating in capitals with stylized theatrical masks. The three central windows at the second story contain French doors shielded by decorative, lyre-adorned wrought-iron balconies. The outer window openings are surmounted by panels and segmental-arch pediments carried on consoles. The center opening is surmounted by a panel with a male head, possibly Apollo, and swags and a broken pediment carried on consoles and encompassing a lyre. The outermost window openings have one-over-one double-hung sash and full surrounds carrying raised cornices. The treatment of the third story windows is similar in the central pavilion and the flanking bays. All have one-over-one double-hung sash and are covered by decorative wrought-iron grilles which curve at their bases. The openings are set on corbeled sills and are surmounted by large splayed keys, which are applied over a continuous molding spanning the facade. The central window is slightly differentiated by a full surround and a large console instead of a keystone. An entablature with a leaf-and-tongue molding and modillioned cornice and bearing a tablet inscribed "HUDSON," sets off the fourth story. The three central windows have stone surrounds keyed to the brickwork. All five windows have one-over-one double-hung sash and are surmounted by splayed keys. On the central pavilion these overlap the frieze of the entablature which terminates the facade. The dentilled sheetmetal cornice carries a balustraded parapet of sheetmetal with piers at the ends and above the central pavilion and a central panel adorned with swags and surmounted by an oval shield surrounded by consoles. The cornice returns at the east and west sides.

The 45th Street elevation of the theater is much simpler as befits a secondary facade. It is of brick now painted buff. The base is articulated by three blind arched openings. Large stage door openings are placed in the outer two. Paired pilasters with Ionic capitals incorporating stylized theatrical masks define the upper stories. This elevation is surmounted by a sheetmetal entablature composed of a reeded frieze with medallions and a modillioned cornice. The cornice returns at the east and west sides. Single five-story bays flank the major portion of this elevation at the east and west. Windows set below stone lintels have one-over-one sash. The fifth floor windows are surmounted by brick arches.

(MP)

Notes

1. Architecturally significant features are underlined.

Conclusion

The Hudson Theater survives today as one of the historic playhouses that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. One of the first group of theaters to be constructed in the newly emerging Times Square area, it helped shape the character of the theater district. Today it survives as one of the oldest legitimate Broadway theaters. Built for Henry B. Harris, with a handsome, restrained Beaux-Arts Classic facade designed by Israels & Harder, the Hudson served as home for his productions and his stars. The Hudson represents an important aspect of the nation's theatrical history.

For three quarters of a century the Hudson Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays, beginning with Henry B. Harris's productions, through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The preparation of this report has involved the work of a number of consultants supervised and edited by Anthony W. Robins (AR), Deputy Director of Research. Individual authors are noted by initials at the ends of their sections. The consultants were Margaret Knapp (MMK), and William Speck (WS). Gale Harris of the Research Department supplemented the research, and verified the citations and sources. Marjorie Pearson (MP), Director of Research, wrote the description. Research Department staff who contributed to the report include Marion Cleaver, Virginia Kurshan, Susan Strauss, and Jay Shockley.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission gratefully acknowledges the assistance rendered by many concerned citizens in studying the Broadway theaters. Special thanks are due the New York City Planning Commission; Community Planning Board 5, Manhattan; the New York Landmarks Conservancy; the Actors Equity Committee to Save the Theaters; and the individual theater owners.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Hudson Theater has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, New York State, and the nation.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Hudson Theater survives today as one of the historic theaters that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that, built in 1902-04, it is among the oldest legitimate theaters surviving in New York City; that it was part of a turn-of-the-century burst of theater construction that helped shape the character of the newly emerging theater district around Times Square; that it was designed to house the stars, productions, and offices of Henry B. Harris, a top Broadway producer of the era, and as such represents a special aspect of the nation's theatrical history; that its design, begun by J.B. McElfatrick & Son and completed by Israels & Harder, is a restrained but handsome version of the Beaux-Arts classicism prevalent in theaters of the period; that its significant architectural features include its rusticated base, carved cornucopia, window surrounds, mudusa-head capitals, and balustrade with elaborate cartouche; that for three quarters of a century the Hudson Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater; and that as such it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Hudson Theater, 139-141 West 44th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 997, Lot 15, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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APPENDIX

The following production history of the Hudson Theater is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Gale Harris and Susan Strauss of the Research Department staff against George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of the "Stage Today," 1941-43, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; The Best Plays of... [annual] (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1899-present); Theatre World [annual] Daniel Blum, editor (New York: Theatre World, 1946-present), The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heinman, Inc., 1966); Edwin Bronner, The Encyclopedia of American Theater, 1900-1975 (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980); Gerald Bordman, Oxford Companion to American Theatre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

1903

COUSIN KATE 10/19/03 (44 perfs.) by Hubert Henry Davies; with Ethel Barrymore and Bruce McRae.

THE MARRIAGE OF KITTY 11/30/03 (51 perfs.) by Fred Gresac and F. de Croisset; with Marie Tempest, Leonard Boyne, Ada Ferrar and Gilbert Hare.

1904

RANSOM'S FOLLY 1/18/04 (61 perfs.) by Richard Harding Davis; with Robert Edeson.

MAN PROPOSES 3/11/04 (24 perfs.) by Ernest Denny; with Henry Miller.

CAMILLE 4/18/04 (16 perfs.) by Alexandre Dumas, Jr.; with Margaret Anglin and Henry Miller.

LETTY 9/12/04 (64 perfs.) by Arthur Wing Pinero; with William Faversham.

SUNDAY 11/15/04 (79 perfs.) by Thomas Raceward; with Ethel Barrymore and Bruce McRae.

1905

STRONGHEART 1/30/05 (66 perfs.) by William C. DeMille; with Robert Edeson and Macey Harlan.

THE LADY SHORE 3/27/05 (16 perfs.) by Mrs. Vance Thompson and Lena R. Smith; with Virginia Harned and Robert Loraine.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON 4/7/05 (5 perfs.) by Robert Browning.

THE HEIR TO THE HOORAH 4/10/05 (59 perfs.) by Paul Armstrong; with Guy Bates Post and Beverly Sitgreaves.

MAN AND SUPERMAN 9/5/05 (192 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Richard Bennett, Fay Davis and Clara Bloodgood.

1906

THE DUEL 2/12/06 (73 perfs.) by Henri Lavedan translated by Louis N. Parker; with Otis Skinner and Guy Standing.

THE AMERICAN LORD 4/16/06 (32 perfs.) by Charles T. Dazey and George H. Broadhurst; with William H. Crane.

THE HYPOCRITES 8/30/06 (209 perfs.) by Henry Arthur Jones; with Richard Bennett, Jessie Millward, and Doris Keane.

1907

BREWSTER'S MILLIONS 2/25/07 (163 total perfs.) by Winchell Smith and Byron Ongley, from a story by George Barr McCutcheon; with Jack Devereaux. (First opened at the New Amsterdam Theater 12/31/06).

CLASSMATES 8/29/07 (102 perfs.) by William C. DeMille and Margaret Turnbull.

THE CHORUS LADY 11/25/07 (33 perfs.) by James Forbes; with Rose Stahl.

HER SISTER 12/25/07 (61 perfs.) by Clyde Fitch and Cosmo Gordon Lennox; with Ethel Barrymore and Lucile Watson.

1908

CALL OF THE NORTH 8/24/08 (32 perfs.) by George H. Broadhurst; with Robert Edeson and David Torrence.

THE OFFENDERS 9/23/08 (22 perfs.) by Elmer Blaney Harris; with Robert Edeson.

PIERRE OF THE PLAINS 10/12/08 (32 perfs.) by Edgar Selwyn; with Elsie Ferguson, Edgar Selwyn, Joseph Adelman and George Schaeffer.

LADY FREDERICK 11/9/08 (96 perfs.) by W. Somerset Maugham; with Ethel Barrymore and Bruce McRae.

1909

THE THIRD DEGREE 2/1/09 (168 perfs.) by Charles Klein; with Wallace Eddinger and George Barnum.

AN AMERICAN WIDOW 9/6/09 (32 perfs.) by Kellett Chambers; with Frederick Perry and Joseph Adelman.

ON THE EVE 10/4/09 (24 perfs.) by Martha Morton; with Joseph Adelman and Minna Adelman.

THE BUILDER OF BRIDGES 10/26/09 (47 perfs.) by Alfred Sutro; with DeWitt C. Jennings.

ARSENE LUPIN 12/13/09 (144 total perfs.) by F. de Croisset and Maurice Le Blanc; with Beverly Sitgreaves, Charles Harbury, and William Coutenay. (First opened at the Lyceum Theater 8/26/09).

THE NEXT OF KIN 12/27/09 (24 perfs.) by Charles Klein; with Joseph Adelman, Minna Adelman, Hedwig Reicher, Frederick Perry, Harry Davenport, Wallace Eddinger and Maggie Fielding.

1910

A LUCKY STAR 1/18/10 (95 perfs.) by Anne Crawford Flexner; with William Collier and "Buster" (William Collier, Jr.).

THE SPENDTHRIFT 4/11/10 (88 perfs.) by Porter Emerson Browne; with Jack Devereaux.

THE DESERTERS 9/20/10 (63 perfs.) by Robert Peyton Carter and Anna Alice Chapin; with Frederick Truesdell and James J. Ryan.

NOBODY'S WIDOW 11/15/10 (215 perfs.) by Avery Hopwood.

1911

SNOBS 9/4/11 (64 perfs.) by George Bronson-Howard; with Reginald Huston and Frank McIntire.

THE PRICE 11/1/11 (77 perfs.) by George Broadhurst; with Warner Oland, George W. Barnum and Jessie Ralph.

1912

THE RETURN FROM JERUSALEM 1/10/12 (53 perfs.) by Maurice Donnay; with Madame Simone and Belle Starr.

THE LADY OF DREAMS 2/28/12 (21 perfs.) by Edmond Rostand; with Madame Simone and Margaret Wycherly.

FROU-FROU 3/18/12 (8 perfs.) by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halvey; with Madame Simone and Julia Taylor.

THE RIGHT TO BE HAPPY 3/26/12 (31 perfs.) by H. Kellett Chambers.

HONEST JIM BLUNT 9/16/12 (16 perfs.) by William Boden.

MAN AND SUPERMAN 9/30/12 (32 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with May Seton and Sydney Valentine.

THE TRIAL MARRIAGE 10/29/12 (23 perfs.) by Elmer Harris.

THE HIGH ROAD 11/19/12 (71 perfs.) by Edward Sheldon; with Mrs. Fiske and Frederick Perry.

1913

NAN 1/13/13 (1 matinee perf.) by John Masefield.

POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL 1/21/13 (160 perfs.) by Eleanor Gates; with Alan Hale.

THE FIGHT 9/2/13 (80 perfs.) Bayard Veiller; with Margaret Wycherly.

GENERAL JOHN REGAN 11/10/13 (72 perfs.) by George A. Birmingham.

1914

A LITTLE WATER ON THE SIDE 1/6/14 (63 perfs.) by William Collier and Grant Stewart; with William Collier, Jr. and Sr.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO 3/12/14 (16 perfs.) by Augustin MacHugh; with Louise Drew, Alice Carrington, Karl Ritter and John L. Arthur.

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN 3/30/14 (72 perfs.) by Oscar Wilde; with Sidney Greenstreet and Margaret Anglin. (Moved to Liberty Theater 4/13/14.)

THE DUMMY 4/13/14 (200 perfs.) by Harvey J. O'Higgins and Harriet Ford; with Frank Connor and Joseph Brennan.

THE HEART OF A THIEF 10/5/14 (8 perfs.) by Paul Armstrong; with Martha Hedman and Anne Sutherland.

A PERFECT LADY 10/28/14 (21 perfs.) by Channing Pollock and Rennold Wolf; with Rose Stahl, James Cody and Louis Mason.

THE BIG IDEA 11/16/14 (24 perfs.) by A.E. Thomas and Clayton Hamilton.

THE SHOW SHOP 12/13/14 (156 perfs.) by James Forbes; with Douglas Fairbanks.

1915

ALICE IN WONDERLAND 4/5/15 (20 total perfs.) dramatized by Alice Gerstenberg from the novels by Lewis Carroll. (First opened at the Booth Theater 3/12/15.)

1916

BUNNY 1/4/16 (16 perfs.) by Austin Strong; with Eva Le Gallienne, Lewis S. Stone and Harold Hubert.

THE CINDERELLA MAN 1/17/16 (192 perfs.) by Edward Childs Carpenter; with Charles Lane, and Reginald Mason.

POLLYANNA 9/18/16 (112 perfs.) by Catherine Chisholm Cushing; with Philip Merivale.

SHIRLEY KAY 12/25/16 (88 perfs.) by Hulbert Footner; with William Holden, Helen Erskine and Lee Baker.

1917

OUR BETTERS 3/12/17 (112 perfs.) by W. Somerset Maugham; with Chrystal Herne, Leonore Harris and John Flood.

THE DELUGE 8/20/17 (16 perfs.) by Henning Berger; with Edward G. Robinson, Pauline Lord, William Dick and Robert McWade.

GOOD NIGHT, PAUL 9/3/17 (40 perfs.) by Roland Oliver and Charles Dickson; with Elizabeth Murray and Ralph Herz.

THE RESCUING ANGEL 10/8/17 (32 perfs.) by Clare Kummer; with Billie Burke, Robert McWade and Frederick Perry.

THE PIPES OF PAN 11/6/17 (87 perfs.) by Edward Childs Carpenter; with Edith King, Norman Trevor and Henry Travers.

1918

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE WIFE 1/30/18 (22 perfs.) by Frederick & Fanny Hatton; with Minna Gombel, Lionel Atwill and John Cromwell.

THE MASTER 2/18/18 (39 perfs.) by Hermann Battie; with Arnold Daly.

DEMOCRACY'S KING 2/18/18 (15 perfs.) by Arnold Daly; with Arnold Daly, George Frederic and William Frederic.

NANCY LEE 4/9/18 (63 perfs.) by Eugene Walter and H. Crownin Wilson; with Charlotte Walker and Charles MacDonald.

FRIENDLY ENEMIES 7/22/18 (440 perfs.) by Samuel Shipman and Aaron Hoffman; with Felix Krembs.

1919

CLARENCE 9/20/19 (300 perfs.) by Booth Tarkington; with John Flood, Mary Boland, Helen Hayes and Alfred Lunt.

1920

CROOKED GAMBLERS 7/31/20 (81 perfs.) by Samuel Shipman and Percival Wilde;
with Robert McWade and Felix Krembs.

THE MEANEST MAN IN THE WORLD 10/12/20 (204 perfs.) by Augustin MacHugh;
with Mrs. Alice Chapin and Ruth Donnelly.

1921

NEMISES 4/4/21 (56 perfs.) by Augustus Thomas; with Olive Tell, Emmett
Corrigan and Robert Cummings.

THE TAVERN 5/23/21 (4 perfs.) by George M. Cohan; with Clyde North,
George M. Cohan and Isabel Withers.

THE POPPY GOD 8/29/21 (16 perfs.) by Leon Gordon, Leroy Clements and
Thomas Grant Springer; with Ralph Morgan, King Calder and
Ruby Gordon.

THE MAN IN THE MAKING 9/20/21 (22 perfs.) by James W. Elliott; with Robert
Fisk, Paul Everton and Donald Gallagher.

THE SIX-FIFTY 10/24/21 (24 perfs.) by Kate McLaurin; with Lillian
Albertson and Lillian Ross.

THE VARYING SHORE 12/5/21 (66 perfs.) by Zoe Akins; with Elsie Ferguson,
Herbert Evans and Clyde North.

1922

THE VOICE FROM THE MINARET 1/30/22 (13 perfs.) by Robert Hichens; with
Herbert Marshall, Edmund Gwen, Content Paleolobue and Marie Lohr.

FEDORA 2/10/22 (12 perfs.) by Victorien Sardou; with Herbert Marshall,
Edmund Gwen, Marie Lohr.

THE RUBICON 2/21/22 (135 perfs.) by Henry Baron from a play by Edouard
Bourde; with Violet Henning, Warburton Gamble and Kenneth Hill.

SO THIS IS LONDON 8/30/22 (357 perfs.) by Arthur Goodrich; with Donald
Gallaher and Lawrence D'Orsay.

1923

THE CROOKED SQUARE 9/10/23 (88 perfs.) by Samuel Shipman and Alfred C.
Kennedy; with Jack LaRue and Edna Hibbard.

SANCHO PANZA 11/26/23 (40 perfs.) by Melchoir Lengyle; music and songs
by Hugo Felix; with Otis Skinner and Robert Robson.

THE SONG AND DANCE MAN 12/31/23 (96 perfs.) by George M. Cohan; with Louis Calhern, Robert Cummings, George M. Cohan, Frederick Perry and John Meehan.

1924

ACROSS THE STREET 3/24/24 (32 perfs.) by Richard A. Purdy; with Robert Emmett Keane, Fred Raymond and Ruth Thomas.

COBRA 4/22/24 (240 perfs.) by Martin Brown; with Louise Calhern, Ralph Morgan and Judith Anderson.

HIGH STAKES 9/9/24 (120 perfs.) by Willard Mack; with Wilton Lackaye and Phoebe Foster.

THE FAKE 10/6/24 (89 perfs.) by Frederick Lonsdale; with Frieda Inescort, John Williams and Una O'Connor.

THE BULLY 12/25/24 (36 perfs.) by Julie Helen Percival and Calvin Clark; with Emmett Corrigan and Olive Oliver.

1925

OUT OF STEP 1/29/25 (21 perfs.) by A.A. Kline; with Muriel Kirkland, Eric Dressler and Marcia Byron.

HOUSE OF SAND 2/17/25 (31 perfs.) by G. Marion Burton; with Charles A. Bickford, Paul Kelly, George Spevlin and Edith Shayne.

THE DEVIL WITHIN 3/16/25 (24 perfs.) by Charles Horan; with William Ingersoll and Henry W. Pemberton.

THE BACKSLAPPER 4/11/25 (33 perfs.) by Paul Dickey and Mann Page; with Roger Pryor, Jack Daniels and Mary Fowler.

HIS QUEEN 5/11/25 (11 perfs.) by John Hastings Turner; with Francine Larrimore and Charles Brown.

THE MORNING AFTER 7/27/25 (24 perfs.) by Len D. Hollister and Leona Stephens; with Varree Teasdale.

AMERICAN BORN 10/5/25 (88 perfs.) by George M. Cohan; with George M Cohan and Lorna Lawrence.

1926

THE HOME TOWNERS 8/23/26 (64 perfs.) by George M. Cohan; with Robert McWade, Chester Morris and William Elliott.

THE NOOSE 10/20/26 (197 perfs.) by Willard Mack from a story by H.H. Van Loan; with Barbara Stanwyck and Anne Shoemaker.

1927

WALL STREET 4/20/27 (21 perfs.) by James N. Rosenberg; with John Warner, John McGovern, Samuel Levine and Henry Brown.

KEMPY 5/11/27 (48 perfs.) by J.C. Nugent & Elliott Nugent; with Ruth Nugent, J.C. Nugent and Elliott Nugent.

BLOOD MONEY 8/22/27 (64 perfs.) by George Middleton from a story by H.H. Van Loan; with Kate McComb, Phyllis Povah and Thomas Mitchell.

WEATHER CLEAR--TRACK FAST 10/18/27 (63 perfs.) by Willard Mack; with Jim Bubbles, Joe Laurie, Jr. and William Courtleigh.

THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS 11/28/27 (48 perfs.) by Sean O'Casey; with Sara Allgood, Tony Quinn and Arthur Sinclair.

LOS ANGELES 12/19/27 (16 perfs.) by Max Marcin and Donald Ogden Stewart; with Jack LaRue and Helen Vinson.

1928

A DISTANT DRUM 1/20/28 (11 perfs.) by Vincent Lawrence; with Felix Krembs, Mary Newcomb and Louis Calhern.

WHISPERING FRIENDS 2/20/28 (112 perfs.) by George M. Cohan; with Chester Morris, Elsie Lawson, William Harrigan and Anne Shoemaker.

GOIN' HOME 8/23/28 (77 perfs.) by Ransom Rideout; with George Renevant, Richard Hale and Barbara Bulgakov.

BY REQUEST 9/27/28 (28 perfs.) by J.C. Nugent and Elliott Nugent; with Elliott Nugent, J.C. Nugent and Verree Teasdale.

TONIGHT AT 12 11/13/28 (56 perfs.) by Owen Davis; with Spring Byington and Owen Davis, Jr.

1929

APPEARANCES 4/1/29 (64 perfs.) by Garland Anderson.

MESSIN' AROUND 4/22/29 (33 perfs.) by Perry Bradford, music by Jimmy Johnson; with Freda Jackson and Sterling Grant.

HOT CHOCOLATES 6/20/29 (228 perfs.) by Andy Razaf, music by Thomas Waller and Harry Brooks; with Jazzlips Richardson, Edith Wilson, Baby Cox, Three Midnight Steppers and Jubilee Singers.

CITY HAUL 12/30/29 (77 perfs.) by Elizabeth Miele; with Herbert Rawlinson, Dorothy Lebare and J. Anthony Hughes.

1930

- TROYKA 4/1/30 (15 perfs.) by Imre Fazekas; with Zita Johnson, Jack Roseleigh and Albert Ven Dekker.
- VIRTUE'S BED 4/15/30 (71 perfs.) by Courtenay Savage; with Ara Gerald and Robert Strange.
- BAD GIRL 10/2/30 (85 perfs.) by Vina Delmar and Brian Marlow; with Paul Kelly and Sylvia Sidney.
- INSPECTOR GENERAL 12/23/30 (7 perfs.) adapted by John Anderson from the Russian of Nicolai Gogol by John Anderson; with Dorothy Gish, Edward Bromberg and Romney Brent.

1931

- DOCTOR X 2/9/31 (80 perfs.) by Howard Warren Comstock and Allen C. Miller; with Howard Lang.
- PERFECTLY SCANDALOUS 5/13/31 (5 perfs.) by Hutcheson Boyd; with Henry W. Pemberton, Natalie Shafer and Jeanne Greene.
- A REGULAR GUY 6/4/31 (13 perfs.) by Patrick Kearney; with Charlotte Wynters and Edward Pawley.
- OLD MAN MURPHY 9/14/31 (48 perfs.) by Patrick Kearney; with Peggy Conklin and Arthur Sinclair.
- ENEMY WITHIN 10/5/31 (8 perfs.) by Will Piper and Lois Howell; with Walter N. Greaza and Anne Forrest.
- MISS GULLIVER TRAVELS 11/25/31 (21 perfs.) by George Ford and Ethel Taylor; with P.J. Kelly and Ethel Taylor.

1932

- NEVER NO MORE 1/7/32 (12 perfs.) by James Knox Millen; with Rose McClendon and Viola Dean.
- THE BUDGET 9/20/32 (7 perfs.) by Robert Middlemass; with Lynne Overman and Mary Lawlor.
- THE SHOW-OFF 12/12/32 (103 perfs.) by George Kelly; with Jean Adair and Raymond Walburn.

1933

- RIDDLE ME THIS 3/14/33 (71 perfs.) by Daniel N. Rubin; revived by O.E. Wee and Jules J. Leventhal; with Howard Hall, Frankin Fox and Edwin Redding.

ITS A WISE CHILD 5/16/33 (34 perfs.) by Laurence E. Johnson; with George Welcott.

EIGHT BELLS 10/28/33 (17 perfs.) by Percy G. Mandley; with Philip Tonge, Colin Clive and Rose Hobart.

1934 - 1937 The Hudson Theater was used as the Columbia Radio Playhouse.

1937

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE 2/15/37 (16 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Mabel Moore and Walter Hampton.

THE AMAZING DR. CLITTERHOUSE 3/2/37 (80 perfs.) by Barre Lyndon; with Cedric Hardwicke and Clarence Derwent.

TOO MANY HEROS 11/15/37 (16 perfs.) by Dore Schary; with Shirley Booth, Robert Reed, Richard Keene, James Bell and James Backus.

WESTERN WATERS 12/28/37 (7 perfs.) by Richard Carlson; with S. Thomas Gomez, Van Heflin and Thomas Chalmers.

1938

SUNUP TO SUNDOWN 2/1/38 (7 perfs.) by Francis Edwards Faragoh; with Carl Benton Reid, Percy Kilbride and Sidney Lumet.

WHO'S WHO? 3/1/38 (23 perfs.) by Leonard Sillman, music by Baldwin Bergerson, James Shelton, Irvin Graham and Paul McGrane; with Imogene Coca and Rags Ragland.

WHITEOAKS 3/23/38 (112 perfs.) by Mazo de la Roche; with Ethel Barrymore Colt and Richard Carlson.

30 DAYS HATH SEPTEMBER 9/30/38 (16 perfs.) by Irving Gaumont and Jack Sobell.

WALTZ IN GOOSE STEP 11/1/38 (7 perfs.) by Oliver H.P. Garrett.

GOOD HUNTING 11/21/38 (2 perfs.) by Nathanael West and Joseph Schrank; with George Tobias, Guy Spaul, John Barrington and Estelle Winwood.

1939

THE COGGERERS/MR. BANKS OF BIRMINGHAM/THE RED VELVET COAT 1/20/39 (3 perfs.) with Horton Foote, Walter M. Greaza and Vera Visconti.

LEW LESLIE'S BLACKBIRDS OF 1939 2/11/39 (9 perfs.) by Lew Leslie; with Lena Horne, Sammy Fain and Hamtree Harrington.

I KNOW WHAT I LIKE 11/24/39 (11 perfs.) by Justin Sturm; with John Beal and Halia Stoddard.

1940

GREY FARM 5/3/40 (35 perfs.) by Hector Bolitho and Terence Rattigan; with Evelyn Varden, John Cromwell and Oscar Homolka.

LOVE FOR LOVE 6/3/40 (8 perfs.) by William Congreve; with Leo G. Carroll, Edgar Stehli, Bobby Clark, Dudley Digges, Romney Bret, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Peggy Wood and Dorothy Gish.

FLEDGLING 11/27/40 (13 perfs.) by Eleanor Carroll Chilton and Philip Lewis.

1941

NIGHT OF LOVE 1/7/41 (7 perfs.) by Rowland Leigh; with Martha Errolle, Harrison Dowd and George Spelvin.

MY FAIR LADIES 3/23/41 (32 perfs.) by Arthur L. Jarrett and Marcel Klauber; with Vincent Donehue, Celeste Holm and Betty Furness.

ALL MEN ARE ALIKE 10/6/41 (32 perfs.) by Vernon Sylvaine; with Ethel Morrison, Reginald Denny, Bobby Clark and Cora Witherspoon.

THEATRE 11/12/41 (69 perfs.) by Guy Bolton and W.Somerset Maugham; with Cornelia Otis Skinner, Viola Roache, Francis Compton and George Spelvin.

1942

JASON 1/21/42 (125 perfs.) by Samson Raphaelson; with Alexander Knox, Helen Walker, and E.G. Marshall.

1943

RUN, LITTLE CHILLUN! 8/11/43 (16 perfs.) by Hall Johnson; with Randall Steplight and P. Jay Sidney.

ARSENIC & OLD LACE 9/22/43 (1,444 total perfs.) by Joseph Kesselring; with Josephine Hull, Effie Shannon, Bruce Gordon, Jean Adair, Allyn Joslyn, Boris Karloff and Edgar Stehli. (First opened at the Fulton Theater 1/10/41.)

1944

LOVE ON LEAVE 6/20/44 (7 perfs.) by A.B. Shiffrin; with Millard Mitchall, Rosemary Rice and Bert Freed.

SNAFU 10/25/44 (156 total perfs.) by Louis Solomon and Harold Buchman; with Patricia Kirkland, Edid Markey and Billy Redfield. (Moved to the Biltmore 1/1/45.)

1945

THE HASTY HEART 1/3/45 (204 perfs.) by John Patrick; with John Lund, James Earl Jones, Victor Chapin and Richard Basehart.

STATE OF THE UNION 11/14/45 (765 perfs.) by Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse; with Myron McCormick, Minor Watson and Kay Johnson.

1947

HOW I WONDER 9/30/47 (63 perfs.) by Donald Ogden Stewart; with Raymond Massey, Everett Sloane, Henry Jones, Bethel Leslie and Meg Mundy.

1948

HARVEST OF YEARS 1/12/48 (16 perfs.) by DeWitt Bodeen; with Phillipa Bevans, Lenka Peterson and Philip Abbott.

SET MY PEOPLE FREE 11/3/48 (36 perfs.) by Dorothy Heyward; with Canada Lee, William Warfield and Earl Sydnor.

JENNY KISSED ME 12/23/48 (20 perfs.) by Jen a Kerr; with Leo G. Carroll and Alan Baxter.

1949

DETECTIVE STORY 3/23/49 (581 perfs.) by Sidney Kingsley; with Lee Grant, Lou Gilbert, Patrick McVey, Earl Sydnor, Maureen Stapleton, Meg Mundy, Alexander Scourby, Joseph Wiseman, John Boyd, Les Tremayne, Edward Binns, Warren Stevens, Jean Adair and James Westerfield.

In 1950 NBC bought the Hudson Theater and converted it to television studio. Both the Jack Paar Show and the Steve Allen Shows were produced there.

1959

DAVY JONES' LOCKER 12/26/59 (11 perfs.) Bill & Cora Baird's marionettes.

1960

A LOVELY LIGHT 2/8/60 (17 perfs.) Edna St. Vincent Millay's letters; with Dorothy Stickney.

TOYS IN THE ATTIC 2/25/60 (464 perfs.) by Lillian Hellman; with Maureen Stapleton, Anne Revere, Irene Worth, Charles McRae, Percy Rodriguez, Jason Robards, Rochelle Oliver and William Hawly.

1961

LOOK: WE'VE COME THROUGH 10/25/61 (5 perfs.) by Hugh Wheeler; with Collin Wilcox, Zohra Lampert, Clinton Kimbrough and Burt Reynolds.

1962

ROSS 4/2/62 (159 perfs.) by Terence Rattigan and Dennis Cooney; with John Mills. (First opened at the Eugene O'Neill Theater 12/26/61.)

1963

STRANGE INTERLUDE 3/11/63 (104 total perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill; with Geraldine Page, Ben Gazzara, William Prince, Pat Hingle, Franchot Tone, Jane Fonda, Richard Thomas and Betty Field. (Moved to the Beck 5/27/63.)

1965

THIS WAS BURLESQUE 3/16/65 (125 perfs.) conceived by Anne Corio; with Anne Corio, Steve Mills and Harry Conley.

1967

HOW TO BE A JEWISH MOTHER 12/28/67 (21 perfs.) by Seymour Vall based on a book by Dan Greenberg; with Molly Picon & Godfrey Cambridge.

1968

THE GUIDE 3/6/68 (5 perfs.) by Harvey Breit and Patricia Rinehart; with Zia Mohyeddin and Titos Vandis.

MIKE DOWNSTAIRS 4/18/68 (4 perfs.) by George Panetta with Dane Clark and Richard Castellano.



Hudson Theater
139-141 West 44th Street
Manhattan

Architects: J.B. McElpatrick & Son
 Israels & Harder
Built: 1902-04

Photo: Shockley, LPC

