Landmarks Preservation Commission
November 4, 1987; Designation List 194
LP-1322

BOOTH THEATER, first floor interior consisting of the inner lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium, and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; 222-232 West 45th Street, Manhattan. Built 1912-13; architect Henry B. Herts.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1016, Lot 15 in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Booth Theater, first floor interior consisting of the outer lobby, the inner lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium, and ceiling, the upper part of the stage house; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall, ceiling and floor surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 18). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty-one witnesses spoke or had statements read into the record in favor of designation. Two witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The owner was one of those speaking in opposition to designation. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support for this designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Booth Theater interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built in 1912-13, shortly before World War I, to the designs of Henry B. Herts, the Booth was one of a pair with the Shubert and was among the numerous theaters constructed by the Shuberts, one of the most active and influential families in American theater history. Winthrop Ames acted as a partner with the Shuberts in the project.

Founded by the three brothers Sam S., Lee and J.J. Shubert, the Shubert organization was the dominant shaper of New York's theater district. Beginning as producers, the brothers expanded into the building of theaters as well, and eventually helped cover the blocks east and west of Broadway in Midtown with playhouses.

Winthrop Ames, an independently wealthy producer with an architectural background, had unusual ideas about drama which he carried out in both the

Booth and Little Theaters, both begun in 1912. Like the Little Theater, the Booth Theater was designed to house the new, detailed type of drama called "intimate theater."

Henry B. Herts, the architect of the Booth, earned a reputation as one of New York's most skilled theater architects, first in partnership with Hugh Tallant and later practicing alone. For the Booth he designed an English Tudor-Jacobean inspired interior which responded to Ames's vision of how and where good drama ought to be presented.

As one of the pre-World War I theater buildings, the Booth is among the oldest group of theaters surviving in New York. For three quarters of a century the Booth 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. As one of the theaters in the Shubert Alley grouping (West 44th and 45th Streets, between Shubert Alley and Eighth Avenue), it contributes to the visual identity of the Broadway theater district's symbolic core.

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 at 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 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]

(MMK)

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 around Times Square 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, whle the Group Theater and other new organizations introduced such writers as Clifford Odets and Sidney Kingsley. The Times Square 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 Booth 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.

The Shuberts

Sam S. Shubert (d.1905), Lee Shubert (c.1873-1953), and Jacob J. Shubert (c.1877-1963) formed perhaps the most powerful family Broadway has ever seen. Children of an immigrant peddlar from Czarist Lithuania,[1] the Shuberts rose to become the dominant force in legitimate theater in America. By 1924 they were producing 25 percent of all the plays in America, and controlled 75 percent of the theater tickets sold in this country.[2]

The Shuberts' career in the theater actually began in front of a theater: Lee Shubert sold newspapers outside Wieting's Opera House in Syracuse. Soon his brother Sam began to help him. The manager of Wieting's then made Lee his personal errand boy. Sam Shubert was the first in the family actually to work in a theater: soon after his brother's promotion to errand boy he was given a small role in a Belasco production at Wieting's. Belasco was to remain Sam Shubert's idol throughout his career.[3]

Sam Shubert was the driving force behind the family's rise in the theater industry. From a first job as program boy at the Bastable Theater in Syracuse, he moved to Syracuse's Grand Opera House as assistant treasurer (ticket seller) and then treasurer. At eighteen he returned to Wieting's Opera House as treasurer.[4] In 1894 he assembled enough money to buy the road rights of Charles Hoyt's A Texas Steer, and took the play on a tour of inexpensive houses. The tour was a success and the next season he repeated it with Hoyt's A Stranger in New York.[5] In 1897 the Shuberts used the money of local backers to build their own theater in Syracuse, the Baker, with Jacob Shubert serving as manager.

Their success upstate convinced the Shuberts that they were ready to enter the theater world in New York City. In 1900 Sam and Lee Shubert obtained the lease of New York City's Herald Square Theater at Broadway and 35th Street (demolished 1915), while Jacob managed their upstate business. The Herald Square Theater at that time was unpopular with theatergoers, but the Shuberts changed that with a successful production of Arizona by Augustus John. They proceeded to engage the well-known actor Richard Mansfield, and he appeared at the Herald Square in 1901 in a popular production of Monsieur Beaucaire.[6] The success of these productions encouraged the Shuberts to expand their activities in New York City. In 1901 Sam Shubert leased the Casino Theater on 39th Street; he secured the American rights to the London hit A Chinese Honeymoon and in 1902 it opened at the Casino to rave revues. The show ran for more than a year, and three companies presented it on the road.[7]

The Shuberts followed the success of A Chinese Honeymoon with further expansion in New York City. In 1902 they acquired the lease of the old Theater Comique on 29th Street and Broadway, remodeled the interior and reopened it as the Princess. As an opening attraction they brought Weedon Grossmith and his English company to America in their popular production of The Night of the Party. The following year, 1903, the Shuberts leased the New Waldorf Theater in London and the Madison Square Theater in New York City. They also sold a property on 42nd Street to the composer Reginald DeKoven, who built the Lyric Theater there as a home for the American School of Opera and leased it back to the Shuberts.[8] The Shuberts then

signed a ten-year agreement with Richard Mansfield to open each season at the Lyric, to be followed by DeKoven's productions with the American School of Opera.

By this time the Shuberts were outgrowing the financial means of their upstate backers. Lee Shubert found two new financial backers, Samuel Untermyer and Andrew Freedman. Untermyer was a New York attorney with connections to many New York bankers and investors. Freedman was the owner of the New York Giants baseball team, had extensive New York real estate holdings as well as associations with the Morgan Bank, and was among the small group building New York's first subway. With the political influence and capital made available to the Shuberts by Untermyer and Freedman, they were able to expand their theater holdings in cities across the country, including Chicago, Boston, New Haven, St. Louis, and Philadelphia.

By 1905 the Shuberts controlled thirteen theaters. They had also found two additional backers who enabled the growing Shubert empire to expand still further, George B. Cox of Ohio and Joseph L. Rhinock of Kentucky. Cox was the immensely wealthy political boss of Cincinnati and Rhinock was a member of Congress who had extensive race track and real estate holdings. In May of that year, however, Sam Shubert was killed in a train wreck. He had been the driving force behind the Shubert empire, and many in the theater industry thought the Shuberts' dramatic rise would now end. Lee Shubert, however, took over his brother's role and within six months of the latter's death had quadrupled the Shubert chain and planned five memorial theaters to Sam.[9]

The Shuberts' success in acquiring and building theaters across the country and in booking and producing shows brought them into conflict with the central booking agency controlled by Marc Klaw and A.L. Erlanger. In 1905 Klaw and Erlanger's Syndicate managed most of the roughly one thousand lucrative theaters of the approximately 3000 theaters in the country.[10] Every touring company had to pass through the Syndicate's stage doors. The Shuberts began to fight in earnest with Klaw and Erlanger in 1904 when they learned that their musical The Girl From Dixie wouldn't be able to get a road booking unless the brothers stopped renting their own theaters. Following his brother's death, Lee Shubert announced to the press that Harrison Fiske, David Belasco and the Shuberts were joining forces and were inviting "other independent producers" to join them in an "open door" independent circuit. The need for such a circuit was emphasized in November 1905 when Mme. Sarah Bernhardt arrived in New York for a Shubert tour. Klaw and Erlanger denied her the use of any of their theaters thinking that this action would force the Shuberts to accept their terms. The idea backfired and created enormous public support for the Shuberts as Mme. Bernhardt played in tents and town halls across the country. The struggle for control of theatrical bookings between the Shuberts and Klaw and Erlanger continued through the 1910s. By 1920, after countless lawsuits, the Shuberts gained supremacy.

In the five years following Sam Shubert's death the family continued to expand their holdings in New York City. In 1908 they hired Ben Marshall of Marshall & Fox, Chicago, to design a playhouse on West 39th Street. In what was to become a common Shubert practice, they named the theater after one of their stars, calling it Maxine Elliott's Theater (demolished). This was the first theater that the Shuberts built themselves, neither

remodeling nor leasing an existing theater. In 1909 they were involved, along with a number of other investors, in the building of the New (later Century) Theater on Central Park West at 62nd Street (demolished). At the same time they were building a second theater of their own in New York on West 41st Street, the Comedy Theater, designed by architect D.G. Malcolm (demolished). In 1910 the Shuberts hired architect Albert Swasey to design a small playhouse on West 39th Street, named Alla Nazimova's 39th Street Theater (demolished).

During the 'teens the Shuberts continued to expand their control of New York's theaters. Lee Shubert became the business director of the Century Theater on Central Park West. There he met Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt who owned the American Horse Exchange on Broadway at West 50th Street. The Shuberts acquired the Exchange from Vanderbilt and hired Swasey to remodel it as a theater. It opened in 1911 as the Winter Garden Theater with Jacob Shubert as manager. The Shuberts also bought the Astor Theater on Broadway and 45th Street (demolished) as well as an interest in three Manhattan theaters owned by the Selwyn brothers, and continued to build their own New York theaters. In 1913 they opened two theaters designed by Henry B. Herts, the Sam S. Shubert Memorial Theater on West 44th Street and the connecting Booth Theater (with Winthrop Ames as a partner) on West 45th Street. The Shubert Theater building also became home to the family's corporate offices.

Over the following decade the Shuberts proceeded to cover the Times Square area with Shubert theaters, all designed by architect Herbert J. Krapp, formerly of the Herts & Tallant office. In 1917 three new Shubert houses opened: the Morosco on West 45th Street (demolished), named for West Coast producer Oliver Morosco; and a second adjoining pair, the Broadhurst on West 44th and the Plymouth on West 45th, just east of the Shubert-Booth pair. The Broadhurst was initially managed by playwright George Broadhurst and the Shuberts, while the Plymouth was built in partnership with producer Arthur Hopkins. In 1918 the Shuberts built the Central Theater on Broadway and 47th Street (it survives today as the Forum 47th Street movie theater).

In the 1920s the Shuberts continued their fast-paced expansion both in New York and in other cities across the country. In 1920 they acquired complete ownership of the Century Theater on Central Park West.[11] That same year, they announced plans for six new theaters on West 48th and 49th Streets, all to be designed by Herbert J. Krapp. Of the four of these theaters eventually built, three opened in 1921: the Ritz on West 48th Street, and the Ambassador and the Forty-Ninth Street (demolished) on West 49th. The Edwin Forrest (today called the Eugene O'Neill) on West 49th Street opened in 1925.

While the Shuberts were building and acquiring theaters for use as legitimate houses they were also involved in other aspects of the entertainment business, many of them in competition with the legitimate stage. Lee Shubert at one time owned one-third of Samuel Goldwyn's motion picture company and later sat on the boards of both Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and United Artists.[11]

The Shuberts also became involved in vaudeville. In 1910 in Syracuse the Shuberts had reached an agreement with B.F. Keith, who virtually

controlled vaudeville in the East. They agreed to stay out of vaudeville for ten years in return for a share in Keith's Syracuse profits.[12] With the agreement's expiration in 1920, Lee Shubert announced plans to produce vaudeville shows, making inevitable a battle with Keith's United Booking Office (UBO) and its monopoly of the eastern vaudeville circuit. The booking battle with Keith caused intense competition for stars and control of theaters. Eventually, however, it became clear that vaudeville was no comptition for the growing popularity of motion pictures, and the Shuberts abandoned the enterprise.

In 1924 the Shuberts issued four million dollars worth of Shubert theater stock. The prospectus detailed the assets owned by the Shuberts, not the least of which was their control or ownership of 86 "first class" theaters in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and 27 other major cities. The 30 theaters they owned or controlled in New York City represented half of the seating capacity on Broadway. The Shuberts owned seven of Chicago's fifteen theaters, and they booked three of the others. They went on to announce in their prospectus that the producers who booked through their organization included the Theater Guild, Winthrop Ames, Brady, Comstock, Gest, Hopkins, Sam Harris, William Morris and 40 others. Finally the Shuberts noted that 20 percent of the total time on their circuit was devoted to their own productions.[13] The stock sold out.

In addition to the four theaters on 48th and 49th Streets announced in 1920, the Shuberts built Krapp-designed theaters throughout the Times Square area. In 1921 Jolson's 59th Street Theater opened (demolished). The Shuberts named it for Al Jolson who opened it but never appeared in it again. In 1923 they opened the Imperial Theater on West 45th Street and in 1928 the Ethel Barrymore on West 47th Street. In addition to building their own theaters, the Shuberts owned or leased at various times many other New York theaters including the Belasco, the Billy Rose (now the Nederlander), the Cort, the Forty-Fourth Street, the Harris, the Golden, the Royale and the St. James.

While the Shubert Organization continues to function today (the sole survivor among the early 20th century theater entrepreneurs), its contribution to the stock of Brodway theaters ended with the Depression. That contribution, however, was of enormous importance for the creation of the Broadway theater district, and the surviving Shubert-built theaters today bear witness to the productivity of one of the most active and influential families in American theater history.

(EH)

Notes

1. Jerry Stagg, The Brothers Shubert, (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 3.

2. Stagg, p. 217.

3. Stagg, p. 12.

4. Ibid.

5. Sam S. Shubert, obituary, New York Dramatic Mirror, May 20, 1905, p. 13.

6. Reviewed in The Theatre, January, 1902.

7. Sam S. Shubert obit., p. 13.

8. Stagg, p. 208.

9. Stagg, p. 75.

10. Stagg, p. 98.

11. Stagg, p. 165.

12. Stagg, p. 164.

13. Stagg, p. 230.

Winthrop Ames

Although Winthrop Ames (1871-1937) would become one of Broadway's most prominent producers and an important force in the development of the American theater, he did not formally begin his theatrical career until the age of 34.[1] As a drama major at Harvard University, Ames had fallen in love with the amateur theater and written a show entitled Proserpina for the notorious Hasty Pudding Ensemble. His wealthy, socially mobile North Easton, Massachusetts family, however, strongly advised him against pursuing his theatrical interest, and instead urged him to follow the family tradition and join his father's business, the Ames Shovel & Tool Company. Ames had also studied architecture at Harvard, so as a compromise, the young Ames worked with the Boston firm of Bates & Guild, publishers of art and architecture books and the periodical The Architectural Review.

Despite his family's concerns, Ames's passion for the theater was relentless. After six years of publishing and following a lengthy sojourn in Europe where he immersed himself in studying the continental stage, Winthrop Ames associated himself with Loren F. Deland in 1904 to manage Boston's Castle Square Theater. Together they produced a wide range of shows including musicals, classical and modern drama, light opera, and farces.

In 1907, Ames toured Europe once again with the intention of learning about all the technical intricacies of modern theater design, new acting techniques, and the many original approaches being made in the art of play writing. While traveling, he maintained an extensive--and today, invaluable--journal with drawings and descriptions detailing everything from new lighting innovations to the complexities of proper house management and stage mechanics. With this knowledge, Ames felt he could build his own theater in Boston and start a repertory company modeled after the finest ones in Europe.

Indeed, soon after his return from Europe, Ames's ambitious plans and the previous successes of the Castle Square Theater attracted the attention of a group of New York millionaires who decided that their city, and not Boston, should be the proper home of a national performance company. In 1908 Ames accepted the directorship of the New Theater to carry out what he had originally intended for Boston: to give America a repertory company patterned after the subsidized state theaters of Germany and Austria, and the Comedie Francaise in Paris. Unfortunately, the whole plan proved to be too expensive and the New Theater, a large, elaborately designed building designed by Carrere & Hastings at the corner of Central Park West and 62nd Street, was closed in 1912.[2]

Ames's experience with the New Theater apparently convinced him that large theaters were problematic; the two theaters he built for his own productions over the next two years were small, intimate houses. In 1912, Ames built the Little Theater, financing most of its construction with his inheritance from the Ames Shovel & Tool Company. Like the New Theater, the Little Theater represented an experiment in the dramatic arts based on European precedents; this time, however, Ames wanted to present small productions that would not ordinarily have been suitable for the larger Broadway houses. The Little Theater originally seated only 299 playgoers, and its success was said to have been "one of the chief stimulants of the little-theater movement that was to flourish in other cities."[3]

In 1912-13, Ames built the Booth Theater at 222 West 45th Street in association with Lee Shubert. The Booth was built as one of a pair with the Shubert Theater, creating "Shubert Alley" at the rear of the Astor Hotel. The larger Shubert Theater was intended as a memorial to Sam S. Shubert, but the Booth was designed to Ames's specifications as a small, intimate house.

Ames's own architectural background, both in architectural studies at Harvard and in architectural publishing, enabled him to contribute to the design of his theaters. In his European travel journal his meticulous notes extended to architectural innovations in the theaters he visited.[4] He was impressed by the proportions of the proscenium at the Neues Schauspielhaus in Munich. Also in Germany he noted the development of auditoriums with no boxes, steeply raked floors, and curved seating lines. At the Gewandhaus concert hall in Leipzig he found wood paneling being used for its acoustical properties. He later brought wood paneling to both the Booth and the Little, and at the Little did away with boxes.

Always intent on presenting quality to his audiences at both the Little and the Booth, Ames produced, and occasionally directed, plays by such writers as Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, A.A. Milne, Arthur Pinero, and Edna Ferber. He also sponsored a $10,000 prize for the best play by an American author in 1913. The winning entry was submitted by Alice Brown, a little-known playwright, and the play, entitled Children of the Earth, opened at the Booth in 1915.

During World War I, Ames was asked by military authorities to provide entertainment for American and Allied troops. After surveying the situation, he organized the "Over There League" which sent some three hundred actors and vaudeville performers to France.[5] Beginning in 1925, Ames also revived a series of Gilbert & Sullivan operettas including

Iolanthe, The Pirates of Penzance and The Mikado. Despite predictions of failure in theater circles and among critics, each revival turned out to be a smashing success with the public. Two years later, what the New York Herald Tribune called "one of Mr. Ames' most important contributions to the theater"[6] came when a series of shows regarded as obscene threatened the stage with censorship. Ames led a committee of producers in an effort to stop the proliferation of such shows, and generally cleaned up the stage. Ames also wrote one play during his professional career, for children, entitled Snow White.

Ames retired in 1929. Although much of his time was devoted to his country estate in Massachusetts, he continued writing, adapting a French play for a 1930 Broadway production with Edward G. Robinson, and publishing in 1935 "What Shall We Name the Baby?," a study of "a familiar family problem" handled with "scholarship and sympathy."[7]

(PD)

Notes

1. The following account of Winthrop Ames's career is based on obituaries from the New York Evening Post, November 3, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, November 4, 1937; and New York Times, November 4, 1937, p. 25; as well as various clippings from the Winthrop Ames Clipping File, in the Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

2. Following its closing, the theater was taken over by the Shuberts and reopened as the Century Theater. The building was torn down in 1930 to make room for the Century Apartments which took their name from the former theater.

3. Winthrop Ames, obit., New York Herald Tribune.

4. John H. Jennings, "Winthrop Ames's Notes for the Perfect Theater" Educational Theatre Journal, March 1960, p. 11.

5. Winthrop Ames, obit., New York Times.

6. Winthrop Ames, obit., Herald Tribune.

7. Winthrop Ames, obit., New York Times.

Henry Beaumont Herts

Many of Broadway's finest theaters owe their design in part or in whole to Henry Beaumont Herts (1871-1933). As both a technical innovator and an inventive designer, Herts earned a reputation as one of New York's (and America's) most skilled theater architects. Although his career in theater design was made in partnership with another theater specialist, Hugh Tallant (1869-1952), Herts continued to contribute to the stock of fine Broadway theaters even after the break-up of the partnership.

Herts, son of Henry B. Herts of the Herts Brothers firm of decorators, left college to work in the office of Bruce Price, a well-established New

York architect with a national reputation. Price, impressed with his abilities, encouraged him to attend the Columbia School of Mines, forerunner of the Columbia School of Architecture. While a student, he entered and won a competition to design the Columbus Memorial Arch. From there he went on to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he met his future partner Hugh Tallant.[1] Tallant had come to Paris after graduating from Harvard College, where he had studied engineering.[2] The two worked on many student projects together in Paris, and in 1897, after returning to New York, joined in a partnership which lasted until 1911.[3]

Although Herts and Tallant accepted commissions for various building types, they became best known as specialists in theater design. Their career spanned the gradual change in the American theater from the 19th- to the 20th-century pattern. Consequently their theater commissions ranged from a repertory house for a 19th-century impresario (the Lyceum for Daniel Frohman, 1903, a designated New York City Landmark), and theaters for the infamous Klaw & Erlanger Theatrical Syndicate (the New Amsterdam, 1903, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark, and the Liberty, 1904), to houses for the Shubert organization, the classic embodiment of the 20th-century theatrical entrepreneur (the Shubert and the Booth theaters, 1912-13, Herts alone). Other New York theaters included the Gaiety (at Broadway and 46th Street, 1907-09, demolished), the remodeling of the old Lenox Lyceum into the German Theater (Madison Avenue at 59th Street, 1908, demolished), the Brooklyn Academy of Music (1908, in the Brooklyn Academy of Music Historic District), the Folies Bergere (later the Helen Hayes, 210 West 46th Street, 1911, demolished), and the Longacre (1912-13, Herts alone).

Practicing in a period of great theater expansion, Herts and Tallant were able to bring to their new theaters a propitious combination of design talent and technical expertise. Tallant became quite knowledgeable in the field of theater acoustics, and published on the subject, as well as on the history of theater design, in contemporary architectural periodicals.[4] Herts's understanding of structural techniques led him to invent the cantilever arch method of theater balcony construction (first used at the New Amsterdam Theater, 1903), which eliminated the need for supporting pillars and thus improved auditorium sight lines.[5] Together Herts and Tallant brought back from Paris a familiarity with modern French design which they applied to great effect in all the theaters they built on Broadway.[6]

Herts & Tallant's earlier theaters (the Lyceum, New Amsterdam, Liberty, and German), in a theatrical version of the Beaux-Arts style, brought an elaborate, elegant and ornamental look to New York's stock of playhouses. The Lyceum is probably the finest surviving Beaux-Arts theater in the country.[7] Besides their Beaux-Arts training, Herts and Tallant brought to New York their firsthand knowledge of the Art Nouveau style current in Belgium and France, and in the New Amsterdam created an outstanding Art Nouveau interior.[8] Herts, although trained as an architect, was also a painter, and while in Paris had several works exhibited.[9] His interests may have been the source for the elaborate paintings and reliefs with which so many of the firm's theaters were adorned. Similarly elaborate and eminently theatrical were their designs for the German Theater,[10] and, though on a smaller scale, also the Liberty.

The firm's later theaters, including the Gaiety, Folies Bergere, Longacre, and the Shubert and Booth, were equally elaborate in detail, but tended to a more restrained classicism in keeping with changing architectural tastes. Interior ornament ranged from the intimate Jacobean paneling of the smaller Booth, to the grand cycle of paintings in the larger Shubert. The double exterior of the latter two was said to be based on Venetian precedents, and relied for its effect on contrasts between brick and terra-cotta adorned with a polychromatic sgraffito ornament.[11]

Non-theatrical commissions by the firm included a new facade at 232 West End Avenue for Abraham Erlanger's house (in 1903-04, the same years in which they designed Klaw & Erlanger's New Amsterdam and Liberty Theaters); the City Athletic Club (50 West 54th Street, 1909); a new grandstand for the Polo Grounds in Manhattan (1912, Herts alone, demolished); and a number of buildings for New York's Jewish community, including a remodeling of the old Harmonie Club (45 West 42nd Street, 1897-1898, demolished), the Aguilar Free Library (110th Street, 1898, and alterations 1904-05), the Guggenheim Mausoleum (1900) at Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn, the cemetery of Temple Emanuel, the Isaac L. Rice Mansion (346 West 89th Street, 1901-03, a designated New York City Landmark) and the synagogue of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun (257 West 88th Street, 1917, Henry Herts and Walter S. Schneider).

After the partnership was dissolved in 1911, Tallant joined the firm of Lord & Hewlitt (which became Lord, Hewlitt & Tallant), while Herts continued on his own. Herts is not known to have designed any theaters after World War I, but he remained active as an architect. An expert in fireproofing (an important component of theater design), he aided New York's Fire Department in drafting the City's building code. He also served as architect for the Playground Commission of New York.[12]

Herts and Tallant designed theaters together for just over a decade, and Herts did only a few more in the years immediately following, but they produced the finest surviving theaters in New York. Moreover, they influenced the architecture of the theater district well beyond their own few surviving structures by training Herbert J. Krapp, an architect in their office who went on to design numerous other Broadway theaters.

(EH, AWR)

Notes

1. Abbot Halstead Moore, "Individualism in Architecture: The Work of Herts & Tallant," Architectural Record, 15 (January 1904) 66. See also Henry B. Herts, obit., New York Times, March 28, 1933, p. 19.

2. Ibid.

3. The date of the establishment of the partnership has been ascertained through examination of Trow's Business Directories for the period. Because of an error in Herts's New York Times obituary it often has been stated that the partnership was established in 1900.

4. Hugh Tallant, "Hints on Architectural Acoustics," The Brickbuilder, 19 (May 1910), 111-116; (July 1910), 155-158; (Aug. 1910), 177-180; (Sept. 1910), 199-203; (Oct. 1910), 221-225; (Nov. 1910), 243-247; (Dec. 1910), 265-270. Also, "Architectural Acoustics," The Brickbuilder, 22 (Oct. 1913), 225-228. On theater history: "The American Theater: Its Antecedents and Characteristics," The Brickbuilder, 23 (Dec. 1914), 285-290; 24 (Jan. 1915), 17-22.

5. Moore, p. 66, and Herts obituary.

6. It is not known which of the two partners was chiefly responsible for design, but only Herts is known to have continued designing theaters after the dissolution of the partnership.

7. Landmarks Preservation Commission, Lyceum Theatre Designation Report (LP-0803), prepared by Marjorie Pearson, November 26, 1974.

8. Landmarks Preservation Commission, New Amsterdam Theater Interior Designation Report (LP-1027), prepared by Marjorie Pearson, October 23, 1979.

9. Moore, p. 66.

10. See H.W. Frohne, "The German Theatre in New York," Architectural Record, 24 (December 1908), 408-416.

11. "Shubert Theater," The American Architect, 104 (November 19, 1913) n.p.

12. Herts obituary.

The Booth Theater

When it opened in 1913, the Booth Theater was the second playhouse in New York City to bear the name of Edwin Booth, the great 19th-century Shakespearean actor. The original Booth Theater stood at the southeast corner of 23rd Street and Sixth Avenue, built by Edwin Booth himself in 1869.[1]

When Winthrop Ames and the Shuberts built the current Booth Theater, the name was chosen for two reasons: Ames's father had an interest in the original Booth Theater and possessed original artifacts relating to the actor and his stage career; these were assembled and displayed in the new playhouse.[2] Perhaps more significantly, Edwin Booth was regarded as the greatest actor of his time, someone who elevated performance and drama to the level of a high art. Ames was especially interested in furthering innovative and quality drama; to name a theater after the great artist of the stage would be to establish it and legitimize it as a place where such productions could flourish. Ames had already launched two similar ventures, with the New Theater (1908) and the Little Theater (1912).

Ames had seen small theaters both in Europe and America that had proven to be financial as well as artistic successes. As methods in stage direction, scenery, and theater design developed and became more refined, so too did the art of acting. Whereas acting had formerly been a presentative art relying on rhetorical skills and sweeping exaggerated gestures, towards the end of the 19th century it became a representative art more intent on imitating all the subtleties of real life and expression.[3]

Playwrights in turn reacted to the changing notions of theater, and theater designs then reinforced the trend towards intimacy. Gertrude Kingston's Little Theater in London and Max Reinhardt's Chamber Theater in Berlin were two of the most renowned "intimate" showcases in Europe, while Maxine Elliott's Theater at West 39th Street in New York City gained a reputation for presenting good quality alternate drama. A number of other small houses, many intended for amateur productions, existed in New York prior to Ames's small theaters. The Shuberts themselves had erected a series of "bijou playhouses" in the late 19th century, including the Comedy Theater on West 41st Street and the Princess Theater at 29th Street and Broadway.[4]

The Booth was Ames's third theater managing endeavor, and, with the backing of the Shuberts, was his most successful. Built as a pendant to the larger Shubert Theater, nonetheless, the Booth reflects Ames's theatrical needs and specifications, both in its scale and decor. The wood-paneled interior resembled that of the Little Theater, which in turn was based on the designs of European playhouses that Ames had seen during his travels abroad.

Herts designed a small-scaled interior with some 600 seats. Stylistically it is derived from English Tudor-Jacobean sources with classical and Adamesque forms interspersed. The extensive use of wood paneling was to enhance the acoustical properties of the space. The Booth interior remains a testament to the theatrical vision of an important innovator in American theater history.

(PD, AR)

Notes

1. Mary C. Henderson, The City and the Theater (Clifton, N. J.: James White and Co., 1973), p. 144.

2. William C. Young, Documents of American Theater History, Volume 2: Famous American Playhouses 1900-1971 (Chicago: American Library Association, 1973), pp. 29-30.

3. "Seen on Stage," Vogue, June 1, 1921, p. 45.

4. "Little Theaters Past and Present," The Billboard, December 19, 1914, p. 35.

The Booth as a Playhouse

The Booth opened to excellent reviews on October 16, 1913, with Arnold Bennett's The Great Adventure, adapted from the popular novel Buried Alive. In 1915 the Booth saw Children of the Earth by Alice Brown, winner of a $10,000 prize from Ames for the best play by an American author on a native subject. A number of good consistent play runs followed, including the works of such renowned playwrights as George Bernard Shaw (Getting Married with William Faversham and Henrietta Crosman in 1916), Booth Tarkington (Seventeen -- dramatized by Stanislaus Stang and Stannard Mears -- in 1918), and Somerset Maugham (Too Many Husbands in 1919). In 1921, a young Ronald Colman starred in The Green Goddess, the Booth's most successful production to that date; it ran for 440 performances. The record was broken, however, one year later with Austin Strong's Seventh Heaven which ran 683 times. Maxwell Anderson's Saturday's Children, with Ruth Gordon, Roger Pryor and Beulah Bondi, opened in January 1927 and ran for 310 performances.

The 1930s saw Margaret Wycherly on the Booth stage in the long-running Another Language (1932). Raymond Massey starred in the 1934 production of The Shining Hour, while one year later, J.B. Priestly's Laburnum Grove featured Edmund Gwenn. Although not a big success, the 1936 production of Sweet Aloes included in the cast the young Rex Harrison. December 14, 1936, saw the Booth's biggest success open; Kaufman and Hart's You Can't Take It With You ran 837 times, won the Pulitzer Prize, and starred Josephine Hull, Henry Travers, and Oscar Polk. Two years later another play opening at the Booth won both the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics Circle Award: William Saroyan's The Time of Your Life which had an all-star cast featuring Gene Kelly, Celeste Holm, William Bendix, Julie Haydon, Edward Andrews, and Eddie Dowling, who co-directed with Saroyan.

The Two Mrs. Carrolls with Irene Worth, Victor Jory, and Elizabeth Bergner had a long run in 1943-44. Montgomery Clift and Edmund Gwenn starred in the 1945 Tennesse Williams and Donald Wyndham play You Touched Me. William Synge's Playboy of the Western World with Burgess Meredith, Mildred Natwick, J. C. Nugent, Julie Harris, and Irish actress Eithne Dunne, opened the following year. Shirley Booth and Sidney Blackmer won Donaldson awards for best performance in 1950 in William Inge's Come Back Little Sheba. Gore Vidal's A Visit to a Small Planet with Cyril Ritchard graced the Booth stage 388 times beginning in 1957, while in January 1958, Henry Fonda and Anne Bancroft played in William Gibson's Two for the Seesaw (750 performances). Paddy Chayefsky's The Tenth Man starring Lou Jacobi and Jack Gilford ran 623 times beginning in 1959. Luv by Murray Schisgal opened in 1964, running 902 times. Butterflies Are Free won Blythe Danner the Tony Award as best supporting actress in 1969 during its 1133 performance run. That Championship Season followed in 1972 and won the Tony Award, the Drama Critics Circle Award, and the Pulitzer Prize.

The last ten years have seen additional significant hits at the Booth. Ntozake Shange's For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf ran 742 times beginning in 1976. Bernard Pomerance's The Elephant Man opened in 1979, ran 916 times, and won the Tony Award and the Drama Critics Circle Award for best play. Mass Appeal with Milo O'Shea and Michael O'Keefe played in 1981-82, while the Royal Shakespeare Company production of Good closed out 1982. In 1984 Stephen Sondheim's musical

based on the life of artist George Seurat, Sunday in the Park with George, won the Tony Award.

(PD)

Notes

1. This production history of the Booth 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).

Description[1]

Inner Lobby:

The inner lobby is a rectangular space opening off the ticket lobby. A niche holding a bust of Edwin Booth is at the north end. Paneled pilasters with cartouches subdivide the side walls. Exit doors on the east wall have molded surrounds and exit signs surmounted by shallow cornices. Doors on the opposite wall lead into the auditorium. Brass wall sconces are placed on this wall. A Doric frieze encircles the room at ceiling level. The ceiling itself is subdivided into coffered sections from which are suspended chandeliers.

Auditorium:

1) Configuration: The configuration of the auditorium consists of a small-scaled intimate space, wider than it is deep, with a single balcony, a proscenium flanked by boxes, the stage opening behind the proscenium, promenades at the rear of the orchestra and the balcony, a ceiling, and the sloping floor extending towards the proscenium.

Orchestra: The side walls curve in towards the proscenium.

Proscenium: The proscenium has an elliptical arch.

Balcony: There is a single balcony.

Boxes: At each side of the proscenium is a single box connected to and entered from the balcony.

Ceiling: The ceiling is coved, and rises from the entablatures.

Floor: The floor is raked.

Stage: The stage extends behind the proscenium arch and forms a stage picture (visible from the audience) framed by the proscenium arch.[2]

Promenades: Promenades are located at the rear of the orchestra and the balcony.

2) Ornament: The decorative ornament is integrated into the surfaces which define the configuration of the auditorium. Decorative ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Proscenium arch: The proscenium arch is outlined by decorative moldings and springs from the edges of the wall paneling which joins the proscenium. An arched plasterwork panel terminating in an entablature rises above the proscenium.

Orchestra: The side walls are paneled in wood to the height of the arch of the proscenium. The panels terminate in a wide Doric frieze and cornice. Above this paneling, multi-paned casement windows (see below, under fixtures) set in elliptical arches above paneled bases open onto the space. Wall sections between and flanking the windows are flanked by engaged Corinthian columns supporting entablatures.

Orchestra Promenade: The area of the orchestra promenade is defined by a Doric frieze at ceiling level and separated from the orchestra by paneled columns.

Boxes: The boxes rest on console brackets, and the box fronts have panels with strapwork patterns.

Balcony: Columns similar to those flanking the windows flank the doorways to the aisles at the rear of the balcony, and the entablature of the orchestra continues across the rear balcony wall. The balcony front has panels like those on the box fronts. The underside of the balcony is paneled.

Balcony Promenade: The area of the balcony promenade is defined by a molded cornice at ceiling level.

Ceiling: Groined sections above the windows and openings at the rear of the balcony intersect the cove of the ceiling. These sections are outlined by moldings. The main part of the ceiling is defined as a large panel outlined by a wide latticework band. This band is intersected by four semi-circles which are outlined by a continuous plasterwork band.

3) Attached fixtures:

Orchestra: One enters the auditorium at the rear through doors on the east side wall. Exit doors are located on the rear wall. Above the wall paneling, multi-paned casement windows set in elliptical arches above

paneled bases open onto the space. The presence of such windows is highly unusual in Broadway theater designs.

Light fixtures: Existing light fixtures are stylistically compatible with the character of the auditorium. Four brass and crystal chandeliers, not original, are suspended from the ceiling. Original two-armed brass sconces are placed on the wall below the boxes. Brass and mirrored wall sconces are placed on the side and rear walls at balcony level. Small brass lanterns are suspended from the ceiling of the orchestra promenade. Brass and glass chandeliers are suspended from the ceiling of the balcony promenade.

4) Known alterations: Air conditioning grilles and vents have been installed in the ceiling and walls. A modern technical booth has been installed at the rear of the balcony. The plasterwork was originally painted to complement the woodwork. Much of the balcony front has been covered over by a modern enclosed light box.

(MP)

Notes

1. This description identifies the spaces that are included in this designation. Specific elements are listed and architecturally significant features are underlined as explained in the "Guidelines for Treatment of Theater Interiors" as adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on December 10, 1985.

2. For the purposes of this description, the stage shall include the enclosing walls and roof of the stage house and a floor area behind the proscenium arch, but not any fixture or feature of or within that space.

Conclusion

The Booth Theater interior survives today as one of the historic playhouse interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Located on West 45th Street, the Booth is one of the group of theaters forming "Shubert Alley," the physical and symbolic heart of the Broadway theater district. One of the group of theaters constructed for the Shuberts, one of the most active and influential families in American theater history, during the early decades of this century, it helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district. Built in partnership with Winthrop Ames, a major force in the development of the little theater movement, the Booth reflects Ames's particular theatrical needs and specifications. Herts's English-inspired design is especially notable for the use of wood paneling, important for its acoustical properties. The Booth interior remains a testament to the theatrical vision of an important innovator in American theater history.

For half a century the Booth Theater interior 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 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), Peter Donhauser (PD), and Eugenie Hoffmeyer (EH). Gale Harris of the Research Department supplemented the research, verified the citations and sources, and provided editorial assistance. 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 Interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Booth Theater, first floor interior consisting of the inner lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; 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, and the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Booth Theater Interior survives as one of the historic playhouse interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that located on West 45th Street, the Booth is one of the group of theaters forming "Shubert Alley," the physical and symbolic heart of the Broadway theater district; that it is one of the group of theaters constructed for the Shuberts, one of the most active and influential families in American theater history; that during the early decades of this century the Shuberts and their theaters helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district; that the Booth was built in partnership with Winthrop Ames, a major force in the development of the little theater movement, and reflects Ames's particular theatrical needs and specifications; that Henry B. Herts designed an interior inspired by English Tudor-Jacobean sources; that among its outstanding characteristics are its wood paneling, which enhances the acoustical qualities of the space, and its handsome plasterwork ceiling; that for three quarters of a century the Booth Theater has served as home to countless numbers of 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 an Interior Landmark the Booth Theater, first floor interior consisting of the inner lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; 222-232 West 45th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1016,Lot 15 in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ames, Winthrop. Obituary. New York Evening Post, November 3, 1937.

Ames, Winthrop. Obituary. New York Herald Tribune, November 4, 1937.

Ames, Winthrop. Obituary. New York Times, November 4, 1937.

Ames, Winthrop. Clippings File. Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

Atkinson, Brooks. Broadway. rev. ed. New York: Macmillan, 1974.

Bernheim, Alfred K., The Business of the Theatre. New York: Actors Equity Assn., 1932; reprint ed. New York: Benjamin Blom. 1964.

"The Best Plays of ...." [annual]. New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1899--present.

Blum, Daniel ed. Theatre World [annual]. New York: Theatre World. 1946 to present.

Booth Theater Clippings File. Billy Rose Theater Collection. Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

Bowman Ned A. "American Theatre Architecture; the Concrete Mirror Held Up to Yankee Nature." In The American Theatre; the Sum of its Parts., pp. 199-223. New York: French, 1972.

The Broadway Association. Broadway: The Grand Canyon of American Business. New York: The Broadway Association. 1926.

Bronner, Edwin. The Encyclopedia of the American Theatre, 1900-1975. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., Inc. 1980.

Buder, Stanley. "Forty-Second Street at the Crossroads: A History of Broadway to Eighth Avenue.: In West 42nd Street: "The Bright Light Zone." New York: Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 1978.

"Commercialism in the Theater." Current Opinion. (July 1924), 76.

Cook, Burr C. "Twenty Years of Theatre Building."Theatre,36 (August 1922), 98-99.

Ellis, Edward Robb. The Epic of New York City. New York: Coward-McCann, 1966.

Foster, Joseph K. "Titans of the American Theater." Jewish Tribune (New York), November 7, 1930, pp. 16, 25.

Freedley, George. "Broadway Playhouses." Bound typescript of "The Stage Today," 1941-43. Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

Frohne, H.W. "The German Theatre in New York." Architectural Record, 24 (December 1908), 408-416.

Furer, Howard B. New York: A Chronological and Documentary History, 1524-1970. Dobbs Fery, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1974.

Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates. 30 Theaters. Privately printed, New York, 1983.

Henderson, Mary C. The City and the Theatre. Clifton, N.J.: James T. White and Co., 1973.

Herts, Henry B. Architects Clippings File, Art and Architecture Division, New York Public Library.

Herts, Henry B. Obituary. New York Times, March 28, 1933, p. 19.

Jenkins, Stephen. The Greatest Street in the World. New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1911.

Johnson, Julian. "Little Brown Budha of the Play." American Magazine, 76 (July 1913), 73-77.

Laas, William. Crossroads of the World: The Story of Times Square. New York: Popular Library, 1965.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. Lyceum Theater Designation Report. (LP-0803). Prepared by Marjorie Pearson. New York: November 26, 1974.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. New Amsterdam Theater Interior Designation Report (LP-1027). Prepared by Marjorie Pearson. New York: October 23, 1979.

"Little Theaters Past and Present," The Billboard, December 19, 1914.

Maddocks, Melvin. "Mr. Ames' Revolving Stage." Christian Science Monitor, October 16, 1963.

Meloy, Arthur S. Theatres and Picture Houses. New York: Architects Supply and Publishing Co., 1916.

"A Memory of Booth." New York Times, October 3, 1913.

Moore, Abbot Halstead. "Individualism in Architecture: The Work of Herts & Tallant." Architectural Record, 15 (January 1904), 55-91.

Morehouse, Lee, "Lee Shubert, Showman from Upstate." New York Sun July 25, 1932, p. 12.

New York City. Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets.

New York County. Office of the Register. Liber Deeds and Mortgages.

The New York Subway. New York: Interborough Rapid Transit Co., 1904; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, n.d.

Paneth, Philip. Times Square, Crossroads of the World. New York: Living Books, 1965.

Poggi, Jack. Theatre in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968.

"Portraits." Putnam's Magazine, 5 (October 1908), 126.

Rigdon, Walter, ed. The Biographical Encyclopaedia & Who's Who of the American Theater. New York: James H. Heineman, Inc., 1966.

Rogers, W.G., and Weston, Mildred. Carnival Crossroads: The Story of Times Square. New York: Doubleday, 1960.

Sexton, Randolph Williams, and Betts, Ben Franklin, eds. American Theatres of Today. 2 vols. New York: Architectural Book Pubs., 1927, 1930; reprint ed., New York: Vestal, 1977.

Shubert Clippings File and Notebooks. Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

Shubert, Jacob J. Obituary. New York Times, December 27, 1963, p. 1.

Shubert, Lee. Obituary. New York Times, December 26, 1953, p. 1.

Shubert, Lee. "Picking Amusement for Ninety Million People." Forum, 61 (April 1919), 434-41.

Shubert, Sam S. Obituary. New York Dramatic Mirror, May 20, 1905, p. 13.

"Shubert Theater." American Architect, 104 (November 19, 1913) No. 1978, pls.

"Shuberts and T.V.," Newsweek, 36 (July 24, 1950), p. 41.

"Shuberts' Acquire Broadway Sites." New York Times, November 10, 1948, p. 38.

Stagg, Jerry. The Brothers Shubert. New York: Random House, 1968.

Sumner, Keene. "Sometimes You Fight Better if You're Driven to the Wall," American Magazine, 92 (October 1921), 20-21, 72.

"Sun on Stage." Vogue, June 1, 1912, p. 45.

Tallant, Hugh. "The American Theater: Its Andecedents and Characteristics," The Brickbuilder 23 (December 1914), 285-290; 24 (January 1915), 17-22.

Tallant, Hugh. "Architectural Accoustics." The Brickbuilder, 22 (October 1913), 225-228.

Tallant, Hugh. "Hints on Architectural Accoustics." The Brickbuilder, 19 (May 1910), 111-116; (July 1910), 155-158; (August 1910), 177-180; (September 1910), 199-203; (October 1910), 221-225; (November 1910) 243-247; (December 1910), 265-270.

Wilson, Graff B. Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973.

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie B., Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970.

Young, William C. Documents of American Theater History. Volume 2: Famous American Playhouses 1900-1971. Chicago: American Library Association, 1973.

APPENDIX

The following production history of the Booth 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 Encyclopaedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heinman, Inc., 1966); Play Statistics File, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; Programmes, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

1913

THE GREAT ADVENTURE 10/16/13 (52 perfs.) by Arnold Bennet; with Lyn Harding, Janet Beecher and Guthrie McClintic.

PRUNELLA 12/8/13 (104 total perfs.) by Lawrence Housman & Harley Granville-Barker; with Marguerite Clark, Kathleen Comegys and Ernest Glendenning. (First opened at the Little Theater 10/27/13.)

1914

CHANGE 1/27/14 (11 perfs.) by J.O. Francis.

PANTHEA 3/22/14 (80 perfs.) by Monckton Hoffe; with Olga Petrova and Milton Sills.

THE MONEY MAKERS 10/5/14 (24 perfs.) by Charles Klein.

EXPERIENCE 10/27/14 (255 perfs.) by George V. Hobart, incidental music by Max Bendix, songs and cabaret music by Silvio Hein; with Miriam Collins, May Mc Manus and Ben Johnson. (Moved to the Casino Theater 5/3/15.)

1915

CHILDREN OF THE EARTH 1/12/15 (39 perfs.) by Alice Brown; with Effie Shannon.

THE TRAP 2/19/15 (27 perfs.) by Richard Harding Davis and Jules Eckert Goodman; with Holbrook Blinn.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND 3/23/15 (20 perfs.). (Moved to Hudson Theater 4/5/15.)

THE BUBBLE 4/5/15 (176 perfs.) by Edward Locke; with Louis Mann, Mathilde Cottrelly and Harrison Ford.

MY LADY'S GARTER 9/9/15 (4 perfs.) by Lee Morrison, based on a novel by Jacques Fytrelle; with Minna Gombel.

THE TWO VIRTUES 10/4/15 (64 perfs.) by Alfred Sutro; with E.H. Sothern and Blanche Yurka.

OUR AMERICAN COUSIN (Revival) 11/29/15 (40 perfs.) by Tom Taylor; with E.H. Sothern, Blanche Yurka and Orlando Daly.

1916

DAVID GARRICK 1/6/16 (20 perfs.) by T.W. Robertson; with E.H. Southern.

THE FEAR MARKET 1/26/16 (118 perfs.) by Amelie Rives (Princess Pierre Troubetzkoy); with Edmond Breese and Lucile Watson. (Moved to the Comedy Theater 2/28/16.)

THE GREATEST NATION 2/28/16 (16 perfs.).

PAY-DAY 3/13/16 (49 total perfs.) by Oliver D. Bailey and Lottie Meaney; with Irene Fenwick. (First opened at the Cort Theater 2/26/16.)

THE CO-RESPONDENT 4/10/16 (48 perfs.) by Alice Leal Pollack and Rita Weiman; with Irene Fenwick.

PIERROT THE PRODIGAL 9/6/16 (165 total perfs.) pantomime by Michael Carre, music by Andre Wormser; with Marjorie Patterson. (Moved to the Little Theater 11/6/16.)

GETTING MARRIED 11/6/16 (112 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Henrietta Crosman and William Faversham.

1917

A SUCCESSFUL CALAMITY 2/5/17 (144 perfs.) by Clare Kummer; with William Gillette, Roland Young, Estelle Winwood and Katherine Alexander.

FRIEND MARTHA 8/7/17 (15 perfs.).

DE LUXE ANNIE 9/4/17 (119 total perfs.) by Edward Clark; with Vincent Serrano and Albert Bruning. (Moved to the Cort Theater 10/29/17.)

1918

SEVENTEEN 1/22/18 (225 perfs.) by Hugh Stanislaus Stang and Stannard Mears, based on a novel by Booth Tarkington; with Ruth Gordon, Gregory Kelly, Morgan Farley and George Gaul.

WATCH YOUR NEIGHBOR 9/2/18 (48 perfs.).

BE CALM, CAMILLA 10/31/18 (84 perfs.) by Clare Kummer; with Carlotta Monterey, Walter Hampden, Hedda Hopper and Lola Fisher.

1919

THE WOMAN IN ROOM 13 1/4/19 (175 perfs.) by Sam Shipman and Max Marcin; with Janet Beecher and Lowell Sherman.

I LOVE YOU 4/28/19 (56 perfs.) by G.M. Anderson; with John Westley, Richard Dix and Doris Mitchell. (Moved to the Forty Eighth Street Theater 6/2/19.)

THE BETTER' OLE 6/16/19 (353 total perfs.) by Capt. Bruce Bairnsfather and Capt. Arthur Elliot; with Mr. & Mrs. Charles Coburn. (First opened at the Greenwich Village Theater 10/19/18, later moved to the Cort 11/18/18.)

TOO MANY HUSBANDS 10/8/19 (102 perfs.) by Somerset Maugham; with Estelle Winwood, Laurence Grossman and Marguerite St. John.

1920

THE PURPLE MASK 1/5/20 (139 perfs.) by Matheson Long; with Leo Ditrichstein.

NOT SO LONG AGO 5/4/20 (137 perfs.) by Arthur Richman; with Eva Le Gallienne, Sidney Blackmer.

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY 8/24/20 (79 perfs.) by Ian Hay; with Muriel Martin Harvey.

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER 11/1/20 (158 perfs.) by Ameilie Rives based on a novel by Mark Twain; with Ruth Findley and William Faversham.

1921

THE GREEN GODDESS 1/18/21 (440 perfs.) by William Archer; with George Arliss, Olive Wyndham and Ronald Colman.

1922

THE LAW BREAKER 2/1/22 (90 perfs.) by Jules Eckert Goodman; with Blanche Yurka and William Courtenay.

THE TRUTH ABOUT BLAYDS 3/14/22 (111 perfs.) by A.A. Milne; with O.P Heggie, Leslie Howard, Frieda Inescort and Alexandra Carlisle.

THE PLOT THICKENS 9/5/22 (15 perfs.).

REVUE RUSSE 10/5/22 (20 perfs.) Russian vaudeville; costumes and scenery by Leon Bakst, Serge Soudeikine and M. Ousounoff.

SEVENTH HEAVEN 10/30/22 (683 perfs.) by Austen Strong; with Helen Menken and George Gaul.

1924

DANCING MOTHERS 8/11/24 (312 total perfs.) by Edgar Selwyn and Edmund Goulding; with Mary Young, Helen Hayes and John Halliday. (Moved to Maxine Elliott's Theatre 9/22/24.)

MINICK 9/24/24 (154 perfs.) by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber; with O.P. Heggie, Phyllis Povah and Antoinette Perry.

PAOLO & FRANCESCA 12/2/24 (6 perfs.).

1925

THE COMPLEX 3/3/25 (47 perfs.) by Louis E. Bisch; with Dorothy Hall.

ODD MAN OUT 5/25/25 (16 perfs.).

SOMETHING TO BRAG ABOUT 8/13/25 (4 perfs.).

THE FALL OF EVE 8/31/25 (48 perfs.) by John Emerson and Anita Loos; with Ruth Gordon.

WEAK SISTERS 10/13/25 (31 perfs.) by Lynn Sterling; with Osgood Perkins.

HAMLET 11/9/25 (88 total perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Basil Sydney, Helen Chandler and Adrienne Morrison. (Moved to the Greenwich Village Theater 11/25/25, later moved to the National Theater.)

PAID 11/25/25 (22 perfs.).

THE PATSY 12/13/25 (204 perfs.) by Barry Connors; with Clairborne Foster.

1926

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN 1/29/26 (7 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Egon Breecher and Eva La Gallienne.

SHE COULDN'T SAY NO 8/31/26 (72 perfs.) by B.M. Kaye; with Ralph Kellard and Florence Moore.

WHITE WINGS 10/15/26 (27 perfs.) by Philip Barry; with Winifred Leniham, Tom Powers, George Ali and William Norris.

FIRST LOVE 11/8/26 (50 perfs.) by Louis Vernevil, adapted by Zoe Akins; with Fay Bainter.

THE HONOR OF THE FAMILY 12/25/26 (33 perfs.) by Paul M. Potter; with Otis Skinner and Jessie Royce Landis.

1927

SATURDAY'S CHILDREN 1/26/27 (310 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson; with Ruth Gordon, Roger Pryor and Beulah Bondi.

ESCAPE 10/26/27 (176 perfs.) by John Galsworthy; with Frieda Inescort and Leslie Howard.

1928

BOTTLED 4/10/28 (63 perfs.) by Anne Collins and Alice Timoney; with Maud Durand.

THE GRAND STREET FOLLIES 5/28/28 (144 perfs.) book and lyrics by Agnes Morgan, music by Max Ewing, Lily Hyland and Serge Walter; with James Cagney and Vera Allen.

POSSESSION 10/2/28 (37 perfs.) by Edgar Selwyn; with Robert Montgomery.

THESE FEW ASHES 10/30/28 (39 perfs.) by Leonard Ide; with Hugh Sinclair.

A PLAY WITHOUT NAME 11/26/28 (48 perfs.) by Austin Strong; with Peggy Wood and Kenneth MacKenna.

1929

THE MARRIAGE BED 1/7/29 (72 perfs.) by Ernest Pascal; with Ann Davis and Helen Chandler.

BIRD IN HAND 4/4/29 (500 total perfs.) by John Drinkwater; with Jill Esmond Moore and Charles Hickman. (Moved to the Morosco 4/22/29, moved several more times.)

THE GRAND STREET FOLLIES 5/1/29 (85 perfs.) book and lyrics by Agnes Morgan, music Arthur Schwartz and Max Ewing; with James Cagney and Mae Noble.

JENNY 10/11/29 (111 perfs.) by Margaret Ayer Barnes and Edward Sheldon; with Jane Cowl.

1930

OUT OF A BLUE SKY 2/8/30 (17 perfs.).

THE PALYERS FROM JAPAN 3/4/30 (13 perfs.).

THE ROYAL VIRGIN 3/17/30 (8 perfs.).

LADY CLARA 4/17/30 (28 perfs.).

UNCLE VANYA 9/22/30 (32 perfs.) by Anton Chekhov, adapted by Rose Caylor; revival of the Jed Harris production; with Osgood Perkins, Walter Connelly and Lillian Gish.

THE MAN IN POSSESSION 11/3/30 (97 perfs.) by H.M. Harwood; with Leslie Banks and Isabel Jeans.

1931

PAGING DANGER 2/26/31 (4 perfs.).

A MODERN VIRGIN 5/20/31 (45 perfs.) by Elmer Harris; with Margaret Sullavan.

THE BREADWINNER 9/22/31(56 perfs.) by Somerset Maugham; with A.E. Matthews.

IF LOVE WERE ALL 11/13/31 (11 perfs.) by Cutter Hatch; with Margaret Sullavan.

AFTER ALL 12/3/31 (20 perfs.) by John Van Druten.

SOCIETY GIRL 12/30/31 (22 perfs.).

1932

JEWEL ROBBERY 1/13/32 (53 perfs.) by Lazlo Fodor, adapted by Bertram Bloch; with Mary Ellis and Basil Sydney.

THE FATAL ALIBI 2/8/32 (24 perfs.) by Michael Morton based on a novel by Agatha Christie; with Charles Laughton and Jane Wyatt.

WE ARE NO LONGER CHILDREN 3/31/32 (12 perfs.).

STYLES IN ACTING 4/3/32 (2 special perfs.). Sketches written and performed by Dorothy Sands.

ANOTHER LANGUAGE 4/25/32 (348 perfs.) by Rose Franken; with Margaret Wycherly, Dorothy Stickney, John Beal and Margaret Hamilton.

GIRLS IN UNIFORM 12/30/32 (12 perfs.).

1933

STYLES IN ACTING (Dorothy Sands) 12/22/33 (2 perfs.).

OUR WIFE 3/2/33 (20 perfs.) by Lyon Mearson and Lillian Day; with June Walker and Humphrey Bogart.

FOR SERVICES RENDERED 4/12/33 (21 perfs.) by Somerset Maugham; with Fay Bainter.

CANDIDE 5/15/33 (7 perfs.). Dance Drama by Charles Weidman based on a novella by Voltaire; with Charles Weidman and Jose Limon.

HEAT LIGHTNING 3/15/33 (43 perfs.) by Leon Abrams and George Abbott; with Jean Dixon.

GIVE US THIS DAY 10/27/33 (3 perfs.).

I WAS WAITING FOR YOU 11/13/33 (8 perfs.).

THE FIRST APPLE 12/27/33 (52 perfs.) by Lynn Starling; with Irene Purcell, Conrad Nagel and Spring Byington.

1934

NO MORE LADIES 1/23/34 (162 total perfs.) by A.E. Thomas; with Lucile Watson, Melvyn Douglas, Rex O'Malley and Miriam Battista. (Moved to the Morosco Theater 2/12/34.)

THE SHINING HOUR 2/13/34 (120 perfs.) by Keith Winter; with Raymond Massey Adrienne Allen, Gladys Cooper, Cyril Raymond and Derek Williams.

KILL THAT STORY 8/29/34 (117 total perfs.) by Harry Madden and Philip Dunning; with James Bell. (Withdrawn 9/8/34; resumed at the Ambassador Theater 9/17/34.)

THE DISTAFF SIDE 9/25/34 (154 total perfs.) by John Van Druten; with Sybil Thorndike, Estelle Winwood, Mildred Natwick and Viola Roache. (Moved to the Longacre 1/14/35; later to the Barrymore 2/13/35.)

1935

LABURNUM GROVE 1/14/35 (130 perfs.) by J.B. Priestly; with Edmond Gwenn, Melville Cooper, Elizabeth Risdon and A.G. Andrews. (Moved to the Golden Theater 3/2/35.)

DE LUXE 3/5/35 (15 perfs.).

MANSION ON THE HUDSON 4/2/35 (16 perfs.). Sketches written and performed by Cornelia Otis Skinner.

KIND LADY 4/23/35 (79 perfs.) by Edward Chodorov; adapted from a short story by Hugh Walpole; with Grace George.

BLIND ALLEY 9/24/35 (118 perfs.) by James Warwick; with Roy Hargrave and George Coulouris.

NIGHT IN THE HOUSE 11/7/35 (12 perfs.).

HOW BEAUTIFUL WITH SHOES 11/28/35 (8 perfs.).

THE SEASON CHANGES 12/23/35 (8 perfs.).

1936

MID-WEST 1/7/36 (22 perfs.).

RUTH DRAPER 1/19/36 (9 perfs.).

LADY PRECIOUS STREAM 1/27/36 (104 perfs.) by S.S. Hsiung; with Mai Mai Sze, Helen Chandler, Bramwell Fletcher and Clarence Derwent.

SWEET ALOES 3/2/36 (24 perfs.).

THE GOLDEN JOURNEY 9/15/36 (23 perfs.).

SWING YOUR LADY! 10/18/36 (101 perfs.) by Kenyon Nicholson and Charles Robinson; with John Alexander and Hope Emerson.

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU 12/14/36 (837 perfs.) by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart; with Josephine Hull, Henry Travers, Paula Trueman, George Heller, Frank Conlan, Oscar Polk and Margot Stevenson.

1938

DAME NATURE 9/26/38 (48 perfs.) by Andre Birabeau, adapted by Patricia Collinge; with Lois Hall, Montgomery Clift, Jessie Royce Landis and Onslow Stevens.

HERE COME THE CLOWNS 12/7/38 (88 perfs.) by Philip Barry; with Eddie Dowling and Madge Evans.

1939

ONE FOR THE MONEY 2/4/39 (132 perfs.) by Nancy Hamilton, music by Morgan Lewis; with Keenan Wynn, Gene Kelly, Alfred Drake, Brenda Forbes and Ruth Matteson.

THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE 10/25/39 (185 perfs.) by William Saroyan; with Eddie Dowling, Edward Andrews, Julie Haydon, Gene Kelly, William Bendix, Celeste Holm and Will Lee.

1940

TWO FOR THE SHOW 2/8/40 (124 perfs.) by Nancy Hamilton, music by Morgan Lewis; with Eve Arden, Betty Hutton, Alfred Drake and Keenan Wynn.

BOYD'S DAUGHTER 10/11/40 (3 perfs.).

GLAMOUR PREFERRED 11/15/40 (11 perfs.).

THE CREAM IN THE WELL 1/20/41 (24 perfs.)

1941

CLAUDIA 2/12/41 (453 perfs.) by Rose Franken; with Dorothy McGuire, Frances Starr, Donald Cook and Olga Baclanova.

1942

AUTUMN HILL 4/15/42 (8 perfs.).

BLITHE SPIRIT 5/18/42 (257 total perfs.) by Noel Coward; with Peggy Wood, Clifton Webb and Mildred Natwick. (First opened at the Morosco Theater 11/5/41.)

1943

THOSE ENDEARING YOUNG CHARMS 6/16/43 (60 perfs.).

THE TWO MRS. CARROLLS 8/3/43 (585 total perfs.) by Martin Vale; with Irene Worth, Victor Jory, and Elizabeth Bergner. (Closed 7/1/44 for a 6-week vacation, resumed 8/14/44.)

1945

THE OVERTONS 2/6/45 (175 total perfs.) by Vincent Lawrence; with Arlene Francis, Jack Whiting and Glenda Farrell. (Moved to the Forrest Theater 3/13/45.)

THE DEEP MRS. SYKES 3/19/45 (72 perfs.) by George Kelly; with Catherine Williams.

FOXHOLE IN THE PARLOR 5/23/45 (45 perfs.) by Elsa Shelley; with Montgomery Clift.

THE WIND IS NINETY 6/21/45 (108 perfs.) by Ralph Nelson; with Wendell Corey, Kirk Douglas and Blanche Yurka.

YOU TOUCHED ME! 9/25/45 (109 perfs.) b Tennessee Williams and Donald Wyndham; with Edmond Gwenn, Catherine Willard and Montgomery Clift.

1946

THE WOULD-BE GENTLEMAN 1/9/46 (77 perfs.) adapted from Moliere's LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME by John Kennedy; with Bobby Clark.

HE WHO GETS SLAPPED 3/20/46 (46 perfs.) by Leonid Andreyev, adapted by Judith Guthrie; with Bobby Barry and Stella Adler.

SWAN SONG 5/15/46 (185 perfs.) by Charles MacArthur and Ben Hecht; with David Ellin and Jacqueline Horner.

THE BEES AND FLOWERS 10/8/46 (28 total perfs.) by Frederich Kohner and Albert Mannheimer; with Joyce Van Patten. (First opened at the Cort Theater 9/26/46.)

PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD 10/26/46 (81 perfs.) by J.M. Synge; with Eithne Dunne, Burgess Meredith, Mildred Natwick, J.C. Nugent and Julie Harris.

1947

THE BIG TWO 1/8/47 (21 perfs.).

JOHN LOVES MARY 2/4/47 (423 total perfs.) by Norman Krasna; with Tom Ewell and Nina Foch. (Moved to the Music Box Theater 3/17/47.)

TENTING TONIGHT 4/2/47 (46 perfs.) by Frank Gould; with Frank Muir.

PORTRAIT IN BLACK 5/14/47 (61 perfs.) by Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts; with Claire Luce.

DUET FOR TWO HANDS 10/7/47 (7 perfs.).

1948

POWER WITHOUT GLORY 1/13/48 (31 perfs.) by Michael Clayton Hutton; with Marjorie Rhodes and Trevor Ward.

DOCTOR SOCIAL 2/11/48 (5 perfs.).

THE HALLAMS 3/4/48 (12 perfs.)

THE RATS OF NORWAY 4/5/48 (4 perfs.).

THE PLAY'S THE THING 4/28/48 (244 perfs.) by Fereno Molnar, adapted by P.G. Wodehouse; with Louis Calhern, Faye Emerson and Richard Hilton.

DONT'T LISTEN LADIES 12/28/48 (15 perfs.).

1949

THE SHOP AT SLY CORNER 1/18/49 (7 perfs.); with Boris Karloff.

RICHARD III 2/8/49 (23 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Richard Whorf.

AT WAR WITH THE ARMY 3/8/49 (151 perfs.) by James B. Alardice; with Gary Merrill.

YES M'LORD 10/4/49 (87 perfs.) by Douglas Home; with A.E. Matthews and Mary Hinton.

THE VELVET GLOVE 12/26/49 (152 total perfs.) by Rosemary Casey; with Grace George, Barbara Brady, Walter Hampden, Jean Dixon and John Williams. (Moved to the Golden Theater 2/13/50.)

1950

COME BACK, LITTLE SHEBA 2/15/50 (190 perfs.) by William Inge; with Shirely Booth and Sidney Blackmer.

THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW 10/26/50 (12 perfs.).

EDWINA BLACK 10/21/50 (15 perfs.)

1951

ANGEL IN THE PAWN SHOP 1/18/51 (84 perfs.)

SPRINGTIME FOR HENRY 4/2/51 (53 total perfs.) by Benn W. Levy; with Edward Everett Horton. (First opened at the Golden Theater 3/14/51.)

SEASON IN THE SUN 5/14/51 (367 total perfs.) by Wolcott Gibbs; with Richard Whorf and Nancy Kelly. (First opened at the Cort Theater 9/28/50.)

LACE ON HER PETTICOAT 9/4/51 (79 perfs.) by Aimee Stuart; with Neva Patterson.

NEVER SAY NEVER 11/20/51 (7 perfs.).

LO AND BEHOLD 12/12/51 (38 perfs.) by John Patrick; with Leo G. Carroll, Lee Grant and Cloris Leachman.

1952

COLLECTORS ITEM 2/8/52 (3 perfs.).

PARIS '90 3/4/52 (87 total perfs.) sketches written and performed by Cornelia Otis Skinner. (Moved to the Golden Theater 4/21/52.)

TO BE CONTINUED 4/23/52 (13 perfs.).

CONSCIENCE 5/15/52 (4 perfs.).

AN EVENING WITH BEATRICE LILLIE 10/2/52 (278 perfs.).

1953

MGM FILM: JULIUS CAESAR June 4 to October.

LATE LOVE 11/9/53 (95 perfs.) by Rosemary Casey; with Cliff Robertson, Elizabeth Montgomery and Arlene Francis.

1954

THE MAGIC AND THE LOSS 4/9/54 (27 perfs.).

HOME IS THE HERO 9/22/54 (30 perfs.) by Walter Macken; with Peggy Ann Garner and Glenda Farrell.

ANNIVERSARY WALTZ 12/6/54 (615 total perfs.) by Jerome Chordov and Joseph Fields; with Kitty Carlisle and MacDonald Carey. (First opened at the Broadhurst 4/7/54.)

1955

THE WOODEN DISH 10/6/55 (12 perfs.) by Edmund Morris; with Louis Calhern.

THE HEAVENLY TWINS 11/4/55 (35 perfs.) adapted from LES PAVES DU CIEL by Albert Husson; with Jean Pierre Aumont and Fay Emerson.

RED ROSES FOR ME 12/28/55 (29 perfs.) by Sean O'Casey; with Eileen Crowe, Kevin McCarthy and E.G. Marshall.

1956

TIME LIMIT! 1/24/56 (127 perfs.) by Henry Denker and Ralph Berkey; with Arthur Kennedy and Richard Kiley.

IRENE HAWTHORNE IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY 10/2/56 (6 perfs.); sketches written, designed, choregraphed and performed by Irene Hawthorne.

1957

A VISIT TO A SMALL PLANET 2/7/57 (388 perfs.) by Gore Vidal; with Cyril Richard, Eddie Mayehof, Sarah Marshall and Conrad Janis.

1958

TWO FOR THE SEASAW 1/16/58 (750 perfs.) by William Gibson; with Henry Fonda and Anne Bancroft.

1959

THE TEMTH MAN 11/5/59 (623 perfs.) by Paddy Chayevsky; with Lou Jacobi and Jack Gilford.

1961

JULIA, JAKE AND UNCLE JOE 1/28/61 (1 perf.) by Howard M. Teichmann; with Claudette Colbert.

A TASTE OF HONEY 2/20/61 (376 total perfs.) by Shelagh Delaney; with Angela Landsbury, Joan Plowright and Andrew Ray. (First opened at the Lyceum 10/4/60.)

A SHOT IN THE DARK 10/18/61 (389 perfs.) by Marcel Achard; with Julie Harris, William Shatner, Gene Saks and Walter Matthau.

1962

TIGER TIGER BURNING BRIGHT 12/22/62 (33 perfs.) by Peter S. Feiblemen; with Claudia McNeil, Alvin Ailey, Cicely Tyson, Diana Sands, Al Freeman, Jr., and Roscoe Lee Brown.

1963

NATURAL AFFECTION 1/31/63 (36 perfs.) by William Inge; with Kim Stanley, Tom Bosley and Harry Guardino.

RATTLE OF A SIMPLE MAN 4/17/63 (94 perfs.) by Charles Dyer; with Tammy Grimes and George Segal.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS' SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY 9/29/63 (111 total perfs.) by Edgar Lee Masters; with Betty Garrett, Robert Elston, Joyce Van Patten and Charles Aidman. (Moved to the Belasco Theater 11/19/63.)

ONCE FOR THE ASKING 11/20/63 (1 perf.).

1964

ROAR LIKE A DOVE 5/21/64 (20 perfs.).

LUV 11/11/64 (902 perfs.) by Murray Schisgal; with Alan Arkin, Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson.

1966

HELP STAMP OUT MARRIAGE 9/29/66 (20 perfs.).

HAIL SCRAWDYKE 11/28/66 (16 perfs.).

AT THE DROP OF ANOTHER HAT 12/27/66 (106 perfs.); written and performed by Michael Flanders and Donald Swann.

1967

THE GIRL IN THE FREUDIAN SLIP 5/18/67 (4 perfs.).

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY 10/3/67 (126 perfs.) by Harold Pinter; with Henderson Forsythe, Ruth White and James Patterson.

AVANTI 1/31/68 (21 perfs.).

NEW FACES OF 1968 5/2/68 (58 perfs.); with Madeline Kahn and Robert Klein.

THE FLIP SIDE 10/10/68 (4 perfs.).

1969

THE MOTHER LOVER 2/1/69 (21 perfs.).

THE DOZENS (3/13/69 (8 perfs.).

MY DAUGHTER, YOUR SON 5/13/69 (47 perfs.) by Phoebe and Henry Ephron; with Vivian Vance, Robert Alda and Dody Goodman.

BUTTERFLIES ARE FREE 10/21/69 (1133 perfs.) by Leonard Gershe; with Keir Dullea, Eileen Heckart and Blythe Danner.

1972

THAT CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON 9/14/72 (844 perfs.) by Jason Miller; with Michael McGuire, Charles Durning and Paul Sorvino.

1974

BAD HABITS 5/5/74 (176 perfs.) by Terrence McNally; with F. Murray Abraham, Cynthia Harris, Doris Roberts and Henry Sutton.

BRIEF LIVES 10/16/74 (54 perfs.) by Patrick Garland based on the writings of John Aubrey; with Roy Dotrice.

ALL OVER TOWN 12/29/74 (233 perfs.) by Murray Schisgal; with Barnard Hughes, Cleavon Little and Pamela Payton-Wright.

1975

THE LEAF PEOPLE 10/20/75 (8 perfs.).

VERY GOOD EDDIE 12/21/75 (307 perfs.) by Guy Bolton, music by Jerome Kern, lyrics by Schuyler Greene; with Charles Repole, Cynthia Wells and James Harden.

1976

FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF 9/9/76 (742 perfs.) by Ntozake Shange; with Janet League, Aku Kadogo, Trazana Beverly and Ntozake Shange.

1978

PAUL ROBESON 3/9/78 (77 total perfs.) by Phillip Hayes Dean; with James Earl Jones. (Played in repertory with FOR COLORED GIRLS.... First opened at the Lunt-Fontanne Theater 1/19/78.)

GOREY STORIES 10/30/78 (1 perf.) by Edward Gorey.

1979

MONTEITH AND RAND 1/2/79 (79 perfs.) comedy with John Monteith and Suzanne Rand.

ELEPHANT MAN 4/19/79 (916 perfs.) by Bernard Pomerance; with Philip Anglim, Kevin Conway and Carole Shelley.

1981

AN EVENING WITH DAVE ALLEN 9/20/81 (29 perfs.).

MASS APPEAL 11/12/81 (212 perfs.) by Bill C. Davis; with Milo O'Shea and Michael O'Keefe.

1982

GOOD 10/13/82 (141 perfs.) by C.P. Taylor; with Alan Howard, Gary Waldhorn, Felicity Dean and Meg Wynn-Owen.

1983

TOTAL ABANDON 4/28/83 (1 perf.) by Larry Atlas; with Richard Dreyfuss and John Heard.

AMERICAN BUFFALO 10/27/83 (104 perfs.) by David Mamet; with Al Pacino, James Hayden and J.J. Johnston.

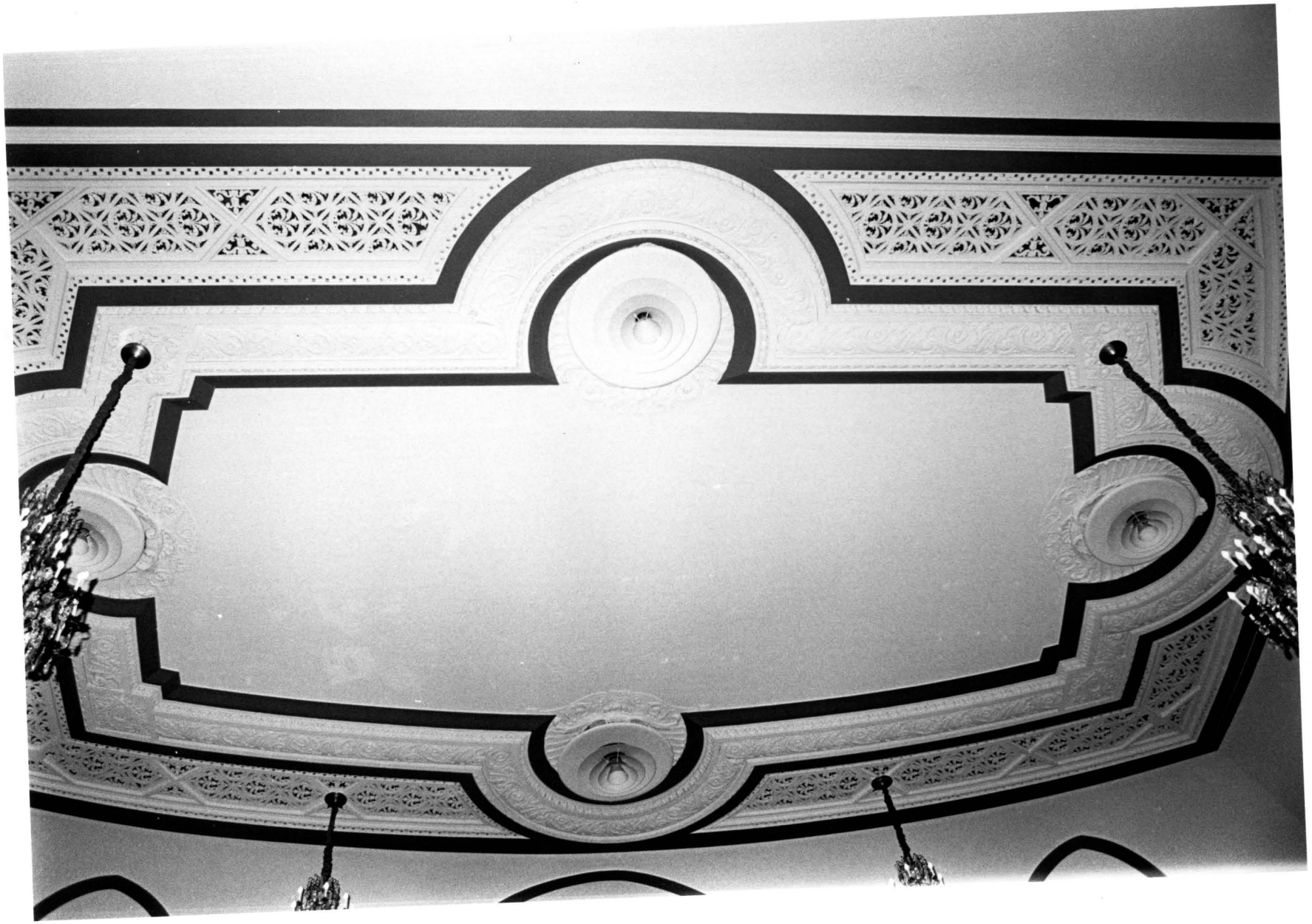
1984

SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE 5/2/84 book by James Lapine, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim; with Mandy Patinkin and Bernadette Peters.

Booth Theater Interior
222-232 West 45th Street
Manhattan

Built: 1912-13
Architect: Henry B. Herts

Photo: Forster, LPC



Booth Theater Interior
Ceiling

Photo: Forster, LPC

Booth Theater Interior

Photo: Forster, LPC 1983