

PUCK BUILDING, 295-309 Lafayette Street, Borough of Manhattan.  
Built 1885-86; addition 1892-93; architect Albert Wagner.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 510, Lot 45.

On November 18, 1980, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Puck Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.12). The hearing was continued to February 10, 1981 (Item No.5). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Puck Building, originally the home of Puck magazine, is one of the great surviving buildings from New York's old publishing and printing district. The red-brick round-arched structure occupies the entire block bounded by East Houston, Lafayette, Mulberry and Jersey Streets, and has been one of the most prominent architectural presences in the area since its construction one hundred years ago. The building is further distinguished by the large statue of Puck at the building's East Houston and Mulberry Street corner; this is among the city's most conspicuous pieces of architectural sculpture.

Puck was, from its founding in 1876 until its demise in 1918, the city's and one of the country's best-known humor magazines. Published in both English- and German-language editions, Puck satirized most of the public events of the day. The magazine featured color lithographic cartoons produced by the J. Ottman Lithographic Company, largest in the country, which shared the Puck Building space.

The current building is the result of three stages of construction, all supervised by architect Albert Wagner; the building and its additions read as a single unified composition. The style is an adaptation of the Romanesque Revival, which had reached great popularity in the 1880s through the works of H.H. Richardson. Wagner's Romanesque, however, was not Richardsonian. A German-born architect, Wagner had worked in New York for Prague-trained Leopold Eidlitz, and his version of the Romanesque appears to reflect the round-arched German "Rundbogenstil" that Eidlitz had brought to New York several decades earlier.

The Puck Building remains one of the most striking 19th-century industrial buildings in lower Manhattan.

#### Puck Magazine

Puck, a comic magazine, was founded by Joseph Keppler (1838-1894) and Adolph Schwarzmann and first appeared in German in 1876. "In March 1877 an English

edition was inaugurated which survived until 1918, twenty-two years longer than its German predecessor."<sup>1</sup> Adolph Schwarzmänn was a printer and Puck's business manager. According to F.L. Mott, in his History of American Magazines, "of Schwarzmänn not much has been written; but the prosperity of the magazine's business affairs testifies to his competence."<sup>2</sup> Joseph Keppler, one of the best American caricaturists of the last third of the 19th century, was until his death the chief caricaturist of the magazine and "the genius of this weekly."<sup>3</sup>

Joseph Keppler was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1838. He had talents for acting and drawing, and for many years did both. In 1854 he entered the Akademie der Bildenden Künste (the Academy of Fine Arts) in Vienna, a renowned school of art, where he studied for two years.<sup>4</sup> In 1867 Keppler came to the United States. In 1868-72 he lived in St. Louis, Mo., where he made two attempts, both unsuccessful, to publish comic weeklies in German. The second one was called Puck, Illustrierte Wochenschrift ("Puck, an illustrated weekly") which first appeared in March, 1871, and lasted only until February, 1872.<sup>5</sup> Never the less, according to the Encyclopedia Americana, the magazine, "while it failed as a commercial enterprise, made his reputation. It was seen at once that a caricaturist of rare skill as a craftsman, of mental fertility and freshness, and of witty and incisive satire had appeared."<sup>6</sup>

In 1872 Keppler moved to New York to work for publisher Frank Leslie on his Illustrated Newspaper. At Leslie's he met Adolph Schwarzmänn, then the foreman of the print shop of Leslie's Illustrated Weekly.<sup>7</sup> They formed a partnership to publish a German-language humor magazine, in New York, to be called Puck.<sup>8</sup> In August, 1876, Schwarzmänn opened his own printing shop,<sup>9</sup> and in September they began to publish the new magazine, called Puck, Humoristisches Wochenblatt ("Puck, a Humorous Weekly"). Schwarzmänn supplied the financial and business support, and gave Keppler complete editorial freedom.<sup>10</sup> The German-language edition was successful from the very beginning, and the English-language edition was launched in March 1877.

The figure of Puck, and Puck's words, "what fools these mortals be!" were printed on the magazine's cover. The figure of Puck was drawn by Keppler himself; his little daughter posed for it.<sup>11</sup> Keppler was evidently attracted to the character of Puck in Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, in which he is portrayed as a mischievous sprite living in the woods. Shakespeare in turn had adapted his character from the figure of Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, a mischievous elf of English folklore.

The English-language edition experienced difficulties during the first two years of its existence, but in 1879 its position began to improve. Circulation increased to 80,000 by the early 1880s,<sup>12</sup> and reached 90,000 by the early 1890s.<sup>13</sup> It was during this period that the Puck Building and its addition were built.

Several reasons account for Puck's success. From the beginning the magazine included three large cartoons, whereas previous humorous weeklies had had only one. The cartoons were lithographs, not woodcuts, which made the whole printing process easier and faster. Puck was a pioneer in using chromolithography for its cartoons. According to Mott, the color lithograph had few adherents among the magazines of the time. Besides the Art Amateur, which published chromolithographs of popular famous paintings, the only major user of the technique before Puck was Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly.<sup>14</sup> Puck's first lithographic cartoons were not colored; soon, however, the magazine had two colors produced by woodblocks, and in two years

Puck was using several lithographically produced colors.<sup>15</sup>

From the beginning, Puck's lithographs were printed by the J. Ottman Lithographic Company, and when the Puck Building was erected the Ottman company shared it with the magazine. According to King's Handbook of New York City, Ottman's history began in 1868, when J. Ottmann, a practical lithographer, organized a small lithographic concern which grew "to be the largest and foremost establishment on the American continent."<sup>16</sup> Its growth was especially fast after 1876, when Ottmann's cooperation with Puck began, and "now it stands easily at the head of all its business competitors, in its facilities for turning out the highest quality of work, keeping thirty great lithographic presses constantly going."<sup>17</sup>

The J. Ottman Company produced not only lithographs for Puck, but also reproductions of "oil-paintings, of water-colors, of pastels" that were so good "as to bewilder the uninitiated observer, who requires the assurance of an expert that he is not gazing on the direct production of brush or crayon."<sup>18</sup> The firm produced other lithographic work as well.

However important the technical level of the magazine may have been, the decisive role in determining Puck's success was the very high quality of the drawings themselves. "It was...cartoons, with their large strength, their sometimes lurid coloring, and occasionally their broad suggestiveness, that gave Puck its standing."<sup>19</sup> The three large cartoons, full-page on the cover and on the back, and a double-spread in the middle, were usually done by Keppler himself, especially in Puck's earlier years. Keppler worked in the style of the German school of cartoons, in which caricature played a large role.<sup>20</sup> The magazine was also able to attract other talented artists whose style was close to Keppler's, although this did not mean they had no individuality of their own.

Puck also employed excellent comic writers. One of the best among them was Henry Cuyler Bunner, the managing editor of the English-language Puck from 1878-96.

All the questions of the day found their way to Puck's pages. Depending on the issue, Puck's attitude varied from mild humor to merciless satire. Politically, in Keppler's time, Puck supported the Democratic Party, but it was never a partisan magazine. It ridiculed political corruption, monopolies, labor unions, suffragism, "and all forms of graft, extravagance, and injustice."<sup>21</sup> It reviewed theater and musical performances. It laughed at fashions and different fads.

Puck participated in the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, publishing a separate edition there. It also had its own building, designed by Stanford White.

Keppler died in 1894, followed two years later by H.C. Bunner. The magazine changed somewhat over the years, but, although it had its ups and downs, it was published more or less successfully until World War I. The war caused serious financial troubles for Puck, and in 1917 it was bought by Hearst. The magazine could not regain its strength, however, and in 1918 it was discontinued.

In F.L. Mott's estimation:

Puck of the eighties and nineties was an institution sui generis. American journalism never had anything else quite like it. Its boldness, its incisive cleverness, its robust comedy, its real literary and artistic values made it a factor in politics and in social life.<sup>22</sup>

### The Puck Building

In March 1885, with the magazine's circulation and success on the rise, Keppler, Schwarzmann and Ottman purchased a property on the southwest corner of East Houston and Mulberry Streets to be the site of a building to house both Puck and the Ottman company. The location was at the fringes of what was then New York's printing district, whose center was the Astor Library on Lafayette Street (then Lafayette Place). The authors of a Puck supplement issued on the occasion of its tenth anniversary wrote that "Houston street marks the southernmost boundary of a region much affected by large publishing houses."<sup>23</sup> Publishing houses, periodicals, and printers were located throughout the neighborhood during the 1880s and 1890s, and it was a natural choice for Puck.

The original building was erected in 1885-86 to the designs of Albert Wagner, but went through several additions and alterations. In August 1890, spurred by the continuing growth of the magazine, Keppler, Schwarzmann, and J. Ottman's heirs bought the adjoining property to the south at 281 Mulberry Street and erected an addition to the Puck Building in 1892-93, again to Albert Wagner's design. The two-year delay was caused by uncertainty, in 1890, about the potential route of a proposed new rapid transit line.<sup>24</sup> Plans called for construction along Lafayette Street, but these were later abandoned. A major alteration came in 1897-1899 with the opening by the City of Lafayette Street. The route of the street went right through the building. The City acquired the land "in the matter of opening, widening and extending Elm Street /now Lafayette Street/ from City Hall Park near Chambers Street to Great Jones Street."<sup>25</sup> The building, originally five bays and 116'11" wide on East Houston Street, was cut back on the west, leaving the East Houston Street elevation only three bays, 71' 8 5/8", wide. An entire new western facade had to be created; it included a new main entrance which replaced the two original ones, on Mulberry for the Ottman Company and on East Houston Street for Puck. The building's original architect, Albert Wagner, died in 1898, but his practice was taken over by Herman Wagner and his partner Richard Jahn, who finished the alterations.<sup>26</sup>

Even before the 1892 addition, the Puck Building was one of the largest structures in the publishing district. The authors of the 1887 Puck supplement claimed that it was the largest among the publishing houses near Astor Library, "being rather longer than the great De Vinne structure in Lafayette Place."<sup>27</sup> The description of the Puck Building in King's Handbook of New York City, post-dating the building's addition, called it "the largest building in the world devoted to the business of lithographing and publishing, having a floor area of nearly eight acres."<sup>28</sup>

### Albert Wagner and the design of the Puck Building

Little is known about Albert Wagner. He was of German origin, and came to the United States in 1871. Before opening his own office in New York he had worked for A.B. Mullett in the office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury and later for Leopold Eidlitz in New York.<sup>29</sup> Wagner's name appeared in business directories from 1881 to 1898.<sup>30</sup> He died in New York in 1898. On October 15 of that year his will was proved in New York Surrogate Court; in it a Herman Wagner, apparently a relative, was indicated as one of the executors.<sup>31</sup> After 1898 the firm of Herman Wagner and Richard Jahn was Albert Wagner's successor.<sup>32</sup>

Albert Wagner does not seem to have suffered from a lack of commissions, as in 1894 he was listed as having two offices.<sup>33</sup> His known works include various types of buildings: residential, commercial and industrial. In the 1880s Wagner designed a number of apartment houses ("French Flats") in Manhattan, and also several industrial buildings,<sup>34</sup> among them a wall-paper and furniture factory (1882).<sup>35</sup> He also designed the building (1886-87) just south of the Puck Building.<sup>36</sup> In the 1890s he is known to have designed an industrial building for the Third Avenue Railroad (1892), a store (1892) on the northeast corner of West 4th and Mercer Streets,<sup>37</sup> stables for Bloomingdale's (1894) on East 59th Street, and also buildings in what is now the SoHo-Cast-Iron Historic District: 123 Prince Street (1891-92), originally a store, and 84-86 Wooster Street (1895-96), a mercantile building which he owned.

Wagner's design for the Puck Building is an adaptation of the Romanesque Revival style. The Romanesque Revival had become popular in the 1880s in New York largely through the influence of Henry Hobson Richardson. Richardson did not initiate the style, however, nor was his version the only one in vogue at the time. Wagner's version of the style is not Richardsonian. Contemporary accounts, in fact, describe the building not as Romanesque but as "Italian Renaissance." The authors of the 1887 tenth anniversary Puck supplement wrote that "the general style shows a remarkably clever adaptation of motives of the Italian Renaissance to the exigencies of modern business."<sup>38</sup> A similar description was given in the 1890s in King's Handbook of New York City.<sup>39</sup> This connection of the Romanesque and the Renaissance, Wagner's early years in Germany, and his work with Leopold Eidlitz, all suggest a derivation from the German Rundbogenstil. The Rundbogenstil was a variant of the general Romantic Classicism movement of early 19th century Europe, popular in Germany in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. The word translates roughly as "round-arched style," and the term encompassed buildings whose design derived from such disparate round-arched sources as the Early Christian, Byzantine, Romanesque and Italian Renaissance styles.<sup>40</sup> Something close to the style appeared in the United States in the mid-19th century--according to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "in the work of such foreign-trained architects as the Prague-born Leopold Eidlitz relatively authentic examples of that mode."<sup>41</sup> Wagner may have been familiar with the style from his years in Germany, and probably learned about it in his years with Eidlitz. Hitchcock names as a good example of the American version A. Saelzer's 1849 building for the Astor Library, the central building of the publishing district. Although the Puck Building is too late to be considered part of the Rundbogenstil, it appears to show the influence of Wagner's earlier experience with it. Such a connection would help explain both the references to the style as "Renaissance," and its dissimilarity to the then more popular Richardsonian version of the Romanesque.

The enormous red brick structure has been a commanding presence in the neighborhood since the time of its construction. Its identity was further announced by the statue of Puck at the Houston and Mulberry Street corner of the building, where the two main entrances originally met, one on either street. There is also a smaller statue over the Lafayette Street entrance. The larger "Puck" on East Houston Street was apparently designed by Henry Baerer, the sculptor of the bust of Beethoven in Central Park. The designer of the smaller "Puck" is not known.<sup>42</sup>

## Description

The Puck Building today comprises the original 1885-86 structure and the 1892 addition, less the western portion of each removed in 1898; the Lafayette Street elevation dates from the latter alteration, but duplicates the earlier design. The building occupies an irregular lot bounded by East Houston Street on the north, Mulberry Street on the east, Jersey Street on the south, and Lafayette Street on the west.<sup>43</sup> Despite the complexity of its building history, the Puck reads as a single structure retaining the integrity of its original design. The original portion is seven stories high, and the addition nine, but otherwise they are practically identical in design and material.

The building's architectural effects derive from the rhythms set up by arches of varying width, within bays of equal width, and from an adept use of red brick which creates the modulations in the piers, the definition of the arches, and the corbeling of the cornice. Cast-iron window enframements, statuary, and wrought-iron entrance gates, and the cast-iron and glass vault-lighting, provide the necessary contrast in materials.

The original section now comprises four bays on Lafayette Street, three bays on East Houston, and six bays on Mulberry. On Mulberry, the bays are defined by large brick piers that run the full height of the building. Each pier is actually in two sections: a wider pier at the first and second stories, and a narrower pier above. Each pier has a small brownstone base and rests on a five-foot high block of polished gray granite; each is banded in projecting brick. Within each bay at the first and second stories is a double-story brick arch, with projecting brick edges. Within the arch, each bay consists of an upper arched lunette and a lower rectangle, separated by a cast-iron transom. The lunette contains a central double-hung one-over-one window, flanked on either side by a swing window topped by a quarter-arch pane. Beneath the spandrel are three large rectangular windows with transoms above and six-paned basement windows below. The second and fourth bays south of East Houston Street contain secondary storefront entrances; the door replaces the central rectangular window of each storefront. The first and second stories are set off from those above by a brownstone stringcourse, beneath which is a band of corbeling.

The second section of pier, running from the third story to the seventh story, is narrower than the lower section; each is banded and adorned with an elegant iron ornamental tie-rod end at the fourth story, and a smaller one at the top. At the third and fourth story each bay comprises a pair of two-story arches, each half the width of the arches below. These arches rest on small brick piers with patterned brick "capitals." Within each arch are a pair of four-over-four double-hung windows above the brick spandrel, and a similar pair below the spandrel; each window in the pair is separated from the one next to it by a slender cast-iron pier with neo-Grec detailing. The third and fourth story bay is topped by corbeling and a brownstone sillcourse above.

At the fifth, sixth, and seventh stories, each bay comprises three three-story arches, each a third the width of the large arches at the first and second story level. Each also rests on narrower brick piers, banded in brick and with a patterned brick "capital." Under each arch, on each of the three floors, is a single six-over-six double-hung window. At the seventh story, each pier is capped by a corbeled "capital" which rises to the cornice. The cornice is actually a course of elaborate patterned brickwork and corbeling, topped by a brownstone

course and a shallow parapet. A handsomely designed fire escape with six landings projects the length of the third bay.

The East Houston Street elevation, and the original portion of the Lafayette Street elevation, repeat the bay motif of the Mulberry Street elevation. On East Houston, there are three bays. The eastern bay has steps leading up to it, but no storefront (this was the location of one of the two original main entrances to the building); the central bay has a storefront entrance with steps leading up to it; and the western bay has a storefront, but its original steps have been removed. On Lafayette Street, the original portion comprises four bays. The bay at the northern corner and the fourth bay to the south contain secondary entrances; each storefront is approached by a short flight of steps.

Each of the four corners of the present structure is chamfered; the end piers of each elevation do not meet, but are separated by a portion of brick wall at a 45° angle. In the corner formed by the East Houston and Mulberry Street elevations, there is a two-story round brick column, with brick banding, topped by a brown-stone globe. On a block supported by the globe stands the large statue of Puck; Puck, wearing a top hat, is holding a mirror (presumably a symbol of satire), a pen, and a book inscribed with the words, "What fools these Mortals be." At the sixth story level of the corner a giant console bracket projects out and up, supported at its top by an iron bar attached to the building; it originally supported a flagpole with a banner inscribed with the word "Puck."

The 1892 addition comprises six bays on Lafayette Street and five on Mulberry, plus the largely unadorned elevation on Jersey Street, a narrow service alley. The pattern and design of the bays replicate those of the original building. The addition is nine stories tall, rather than seven; the extra two stories on Lafayette and Mulberry Streets are arranged as two-story bays, with three arches in each bay over single six-over-six double-hung windows, one at each story. Above the ninth story, each pier projects beyond the cornice, ending in a squat pier segment flanked on either side by shorter pier segments. The third and fifth bays of the addition on Lafayette Street have secondary storefront entrances approached by steps. On the Mulberry Street facade, a handsome ornamental fire escape with eight landings projects over the second and third bays north of Jersey Street.

The primary entrance to the building is in the first bay of the addition on the Lafayette Street elevation. It is set off by a portico formed by paired Doric columns, backed by paired pilasters, on tall blocks. The capitals of the columns take the form of wreaths. The columns support an architrave, whose ends project out beyond the columns. The architrave is inscribed "PUCK BUILDING," with rosettes at either side of the inscription, and a lion's head at either end; it is topped by a balustrade. A console bracket connects the center of the architrave with the apex of the entrance arch beneath. The entrance itself follows the configuration of the large window arch bays of the first and second stories of the elevation. Above a spandrel is a window and a smaller statue of Puck. Beneath, the entrance is divided into two smaller bays by a central cast-iron column, with cast-iron half-piers at the sides, with neo-Grec ornament. Within each smaller bay an arch is formed by elaborate wrought iron; this is matched by a similarly elaborate wrought-iron gate; both are Art Nouveau in flavor. In the center of the spandrel separating the entrance from the window above is a projecting block with an elaborate cartouche projecting out over the central cast-iron column.

The Jersey Street facade is almost completely plain. Its metal-shuttered windows are set below round supporting arches; the major horizontal divisions of the other elevations are continued by minor brick courses, and there is corbeling at the top; otherwise there is little articulation.

The pavement at the foot of the building is composed of cast-iron and glass vault-lights. These survive all along the Lafayette Street elevation, and in front of the east bay on East Houston Street, but have been replaced on Mulberry. All of the steps leading to secondary entrances on all three major elevations are also made of vault-lighting.

### Conclusion

The Puck Building survives today as one of the most imposing and impressive of the old publishing district buildings of the last century, and as a monument to Puck magazine, once a major institution in the city's civic and cultural life. The massive red-brick round-arched structure, located on a highly visible site, is a prominent architectural landmark for the area. Its conspicuously-placed over-life-size statue of Puck is among the city's best-known pieces of architectural sculpture. Albert Wagner's Romanesque Revival design, an unusual and striking version of the style, shows the influence of the Rundbogenstil of mid-19th century Germany, reflecting both the architect's country of origin and his experience working with Leopold Eidlitz. Currently being restored for commercial use, the Puck Building remains an important architectural landmark of lower Manhattan.

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### NOTES

1. "Keppler, Joseph," Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), vol. 10, p.352.
2. Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), vol. 3, p.522.
3. Mott, p.191.
4. L. Draper Hill, "What Fools These Mortals Be," a Study of the Work of Joseph Keppler, Founder of Puck (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University A.B. Honors Thesis, 1957), pp.3, 5.



5. "Keppler," D.A.B., p.352.
6. "Keppler, Joseph," The Encyclopedia Americana (New York: 1975), vol. 16, p.375.
7. Hill, p.26.
8. Mott, p.521.
9. Hill, p.26.
10. "Keppler," D.A.B., p.352.
11. Hill, p.27.
12. Hill, p.30.
13. Mott, p.528.
14. Mott, p.191.
15. "Keppler," D.A.B., p.352.
16. King's Handbook of New York City (Boston: Moses King, 1892), p.884.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Mott, p.525.
20. "Keppler," D.A.B., p.352.
21. Ibid., p.353.
22. Mott, p.532.
23. The Puck Building, supplement to Puck, March 2, 1887, p.3. (further Supplement). Frank Weitenkampf, in Manhattan Kaleidoscope (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947, p.104) put the southern boundary of the publishing district two blocks north at Bond Street, where D. Appleton & Co. leased space in 1-5 Bond Street (a designated New York City Landmark); Appleton also had a department on Bleecker Street, so Weitenkampf extended the district "temporarily" to Bleecker, just one block north of Houston. He put the district's northern border at 23rd Street, "west of Fifth Avenue, if we want to take in Putnam" (p.105).
24. Real Estate Record and Guide, 46 (August 16, 1890), 212.
25. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Mortgages, Liber 70, Page 59 (1899).
26. Letter from Herman Wagner to the Estate of Jacob Ottman, August 29, 1898, in possession of the Puck Building management; we are indebted to Jane Clark Chermayeff for bringing it to our attention.
27. The Puck Building, Supplement..., p.3.

28. King's Handbook of New York City, p.884.
29. Sarah Bradford Landau, "The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered: Arcaded Buildings of the New York School, c.1870-1890," In Search of Modern Architecture: A Tribute to Henry-Russell Hitchcock (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1982), p.162 (note).
30. Dennis Steadman Francis, Architects in Practice in New York City 1840-1900 (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1980), p.78.
31. New York County, Office of the Register, Wills, Liber 606, Pages 133-140.
32. Real Estate Record and Guide, Jan. 21, 1899, p.106. Wagner & Jahn listed the Puck Building among their representative works, presumably because they completed its alterations; Francis, p.78, and Key to the Architects of Greater New York (New York: Forbes & Co., 1900-1901), p.60.
33. Francis, p.78.
34. We are indebted to Mosette Broderick for this information.
35. Carpentry and Building, 4 (November 1882), 218.
36. Landau, p.162 (note).
37. We are indebted to Mosette Broderick for this information.
38. The Puck Building, Supplement..., p.8.
39. King's Handbook of New York, p.884.
40. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books Inc., 1969), pp.55-57.
41. Ibid., p.137.
42. Weitenkampf, p.45. Caspar Buberl, a sculptor who worked in metal, made a "Puck" statue from a drawing by Keppler for advertising purposes; later it was altered for use in advertising a "Puck" cigar. Buberl was employed by William Demuth, a manufacturer of commercial statues cast in zinc. Demuth brought a "Puck" statue to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, but it was of a different design than that on the Puck Building. It is unclear whether or not Buberl had any connection to the statues on the Puck Building. Hill, p.53. The Chicago "Puck" was brought to our attention by Jane Clark Chermayeff.
43. It measures 71' 8 5/8" on East Houston, 257' 3" on Mulberry, 120' 7 1/4" on Jersey, and 232' 4 3/4" on Lafayette.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

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

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Puck Building is an unusually striking example of the Romanesque Revival style, showing the influence of the mid-19th century German Rundbogenstil; that its imposing red-brick round-arched structure, on a highly visible site, has been a prominent architectural presence in lower Manhattan since its construction almost one hundred years ago; that it is a monument to the former Puck magazine, once a major institution in the city's civic and cultural life; that its statues of "Puck" are among the most conspicuous pieces of architectural sculpture in the city; and that the Puck Building is one of the great surviving buildings from New York's 19th-century publishing and printing district.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Puck Building, 295-309 Lafayette Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 510, Lot 45, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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46 (August 16, 1890), 212, 216; 48 (June 11, 1892), 942; 50 (February 10, 1894),  
213.

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The Commission is grateful to Jane Clark Chermayeff, at the Puck Building, for  
sharing much information.



Architect: Albert Wagner  
Built: 1885-86; 1892-93

Puck Building  
295-309 Lafayette Street  
Manhattan

Photo Credit: Landmarks  
Preservation Commission



Puck Building  
Entrance Detail