

Learning Places Fall 2016

# **LIBRARY / ARCHIVE REPORT**

## **LYCEUM THEATRE**



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12.15.2016

## INTRODUCTION

The New York Historical Society is a capsule of important documents in regards to New York City and its history. People donate these documents (maps, books, pictures, and other important documents) with hopes of preserving the history of New York City. At the New York Historical Society, there is an archive full of artifacts which is made available to the public, however, an appointment must be made so that they can retrieve the information needed.

After finding it rather difficult to find any substantial information about the Lyceum Theatre and the Theatre District, visiting the historical society was the next quest upon my search.

## PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Before visiting the New York Historical Society, I assumed it to be a combination of a museum and a library. I was not aware of the archives. In class, we learned that the archives might produce answers as to the answers that I've been looking for. Answers to questions that could not be achieved through the means of google, NYPL, and the City Tech Library Database. I expected to learn about the history of Times Square as well as the history of Lincoln Center. I expected to see old documents, blueprints and maps of the Lyceum Theatre.

## SOURCES found

1. The CITY and the THEATRE, The History of New York Playhouses, A 250 Year Journey From Bowling Green to Times Square, Author: Gerald Schoenfeld, 167-195

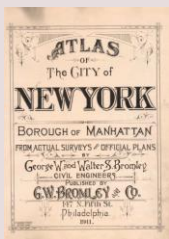
## DOCUMENTATION of site & resources (maps/archival documents/ photos)

## Map of Long Acre Square a.k.a. Times Square

1836



The Lyceum  
would be built  
here 67 years  
later



This map displays what Times Square used to look like before it was developed. After 41<sup>st</sup> street, it appears that there was little development. There aren't any distinguished city blocks. Instead, there were plots of farmland.



## Lyceum Theatre

### The first theatre on Broadway to be declared a Landmark

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
November 26, 1974, Number 2  
LP-0803

LYCEUM THEATRE, 149-157 West 45th Street, Borough of Manhattan.  
Completed 1903; architects Herts & Tallant.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 998, Lot 8.

On July 24, 1973, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Lyceum Theatre and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 34). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Seven witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The representative of the owner spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation. In 1966, the Commission had held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Lyceum Theatre.

This is the documentation declaring the Lyceum Theatre as a Landmark. This document prevents the theatre from being torn down and from being redesigned on the outside. It protects the beautiful beaux arts design of its architects Hertz & Tallant. This document was the first of its kind to declare any theatre on Broadway as a Landmark.

## Map of Times Square 1911



This map shows the changes made in Times Square by 1911. Due to the inexpensive real estate and cheap labor at the time, Times Square became quite desirable for producers and architects.



This is the inside the Lyceum Theatre. As you can see, there aren't any beams of the way of the audiences view. You can also see that the beaux arts design was also carried though when designing the interior.

## DISCOVERIES

1. Neighborhood History
  - a. The neighborhood used to be farm land.
  - b. Real Estate was inexpensive
2. Key Events / Historical Dates
  - a. The Lyceum Theatre became a Landmark in 1974
  - b. Lyceum open 1903
  - c. Oldest continuously running legitimate theatre
3. Key Players
  - a. Daniel Frohman
  - b. Shubert Brothers
4. Important Changes to Neighborhood
  - a. Neighborhood became commercial
  - b. Real Estate Increased
5. Other Observations
  - a. The building has not changed in over 113 years
  - b. The building has a similar appearance as the New York Public Library

## TOPICS & KEYWORDS

Lyceum Theatre

Maps of Times Square

Daniel Frohman

Theatre District of Times Square

## QUANTITATIVE DATA for Area of Study

Subject	Data
Land Ownership	Daniel Frohman → Shubert Organization
Number of Blocks	1
# of Buildings on a Typical Block	To be determined. All the building vary in shapes and sizes.
Materials	Limestone, Marble
# of Stories of Buildings	3 stories + apartment
Residential Bldgs	none
Empty Lots	n/a
Commercial Uses	Hyatt Centric Times Square New York,
Industrial Uses	n/a
Other Data	Interior theatre colors are currently pink, purple and gold
Other Data	Does not have a chandelier.
Other Data	



## QUESTIONS to Research Further

Who designed the street architecture of Times Square throughout the years?

Who was the first black major performer of Times Square? What theatre, show, year?

What was the Lyceum Theatre like during the depression? Shows, was it open?

### RESEARCH METHOD/ ADDITIONAL SOURCES NEEDED TO ANSWER EACH QUESTION ABOVE:

1. Question 1
  - a. Nyc.gov
  - b. Museum of New York City
  - c. New York Public Library
2. Question 2
  - a. Schomburg Center for research in Black Culture
  - b. Shubert Archive
  - c. New York Historical Society
3. Question 3
  - a. New York Times newspaper
  - b. Shubert Organization
  - c. Spotlight On Broadway

## SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

From farmland to high rise buildings, Times Square has changed significantly fast over the years. Although the area has changed, the Lyceum Theatre appears to be the centers constant. I was hoping to find old playbills, however, the playbills are mixed and sorted be play name and not what theatre it was shown in.

Going to the New York Historical Society gave me a lot of detailed information about the city that I've live in for numerous years. I typically resort to searching for articles off the internet when doing research, however, this experience actually showed me that active research reveals a lot more than what the internet has to offer. I would go back to the New York Historical Society if I had the opportunity to do some research on the city of New York.