Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

NHL

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC * Bell Telephone Laboratories

AND/OR COMMON
Westbeth

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 463 West Street

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
New York __ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Twentieth

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
New York	36	New York	061

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	X COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	X EDUCATIONAL	X PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Westbeth Incorporated

STREET & NUMBER
463 West Street

CITY, TOWN
New York __ VICINITY OF

STATE
New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
New York County Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER
31 Chambers Street

CITY, TOWN
New York

STATE
New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
None

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

463 West Street was constructed in 1896-1898 on part of a block bounded by West, Bethune, Washington, and Bank Streets on the western fringe of Greenwich Village in New York City. The structure was built to house the laboratory facilities of the Western Electric Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the American Telephone and Telephone Company. 463 West Street is a conglomerate of plain, sturdy, 13 story, solid concrete and steel commercial structures faced in buff brick and trimmed in terra-cotta. Constructed according to the best standard factory designs of the period, the building is of no major architectural significance.

From 1898 to 1966 463 West Street was the home of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, the name of a company jointly owned since 1925 by American Telephone and Telegraph Company and Western Electric. By the 1966 the building no longer met the laboratory needs of the Bell System. Bell Telephone Laboratories gave up the building and moved to New Jersey.

In 1967 the building was purchased by Westbeth Incorporated, a non-profit organization established to convert the empty laboratories and offices into "living unit-studios" that would provide low cost housing for New York artists endangered of being driven out of the city by spiralling loft rental costs. Between 1967 and 1969 Richard Meir, according to Ada Louise Huxtable, "...one of the citys more conspicuously talented and stylish younger architects," transformed the building into 383 studio type living and working units. The conversion, which was realized at the low cost of $12,000 per unit, received considerable critical acclaim. Mayor John Lindsay officially opened Westbeth in May 1970. Local and national media praised the venture as an example of recycling an older building while at the same time providing artists with low cost housing and studio facilities.

The integrity of the exterior of 463 West Street is whole. It is unchanged from its appearance during the years the building housed the Bell Telephone Laboratories. The interior has been completely transformed into living units, a dance studio, and various commercial facilities.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	X SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In his 1908 annual report to the stockholders of the American Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (AT&T), Theodore N. Vail, often called the father of the giant company, outlined the organization's basic objectives. Our goal, he said, is "one policy, one system, universal service." This slogan, which guides the world's largest monopoly to the present day, served as the basis for the establishment and development of one of the United States' oldest, most successful, and most prestigious industrial research institutions, the Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Bell Telephone Laboratories is one of four major components of the Bell System, the others being AT&T with its operating companies, Western Electric, and the Long Lines Department. As presently constituted Bell Telephone Laboratories was established in 1925 as a separate corporation jointly owned by AT&T and Western Electric. AT&T funded basic research while Western Electric supported engineering research. Although known as Bell Telephone Laboratories only since 1925, the lab traces its history to a small shop in Boston established by a Mr. Williams in 1875. In 1898 Western Electric, which had previously established two labs of its own, moved into a new facility at 463 West Street in New York City. In 1907 the Boston facility joined the Western Electric labs on West Street thus bringing together the research and development activities of Vail's "one system" under a single roof. From a beginning in 1907 with a few hundred employees on West Street, Bell Telephone Laboratories has grown until today it operates 20 laboratories in ten states, employes approximately 17,000 people, and has an annual budget (1973) of $536,000,000. It is the worlds largest private research laboratory.

In 1939 an admiring author wrote a history of AT&T which he subtitled, "The Story of a Great Monopoly." Discussing the Bell Telephone Laboratories, he stated that since the beginning it activities included "...all the engineering arts which pertain to electrical communications equipment, and all the science basic to those arts." The laboratories had a two fold objective; first, "...to advance the art of wire telephony," and second, "...to obtain a degree of knowledge, influence, and control in adjacent industries sufficient to protect the capital investment against possible competition by other means of communication." Since its inception the lab has pursued both science and engineering, i.e. part of its energies are devoted to pure or fundamental research and part to applying the findings of pure science to communication technology. The laboratory thus advances the interests of pure science while at the same time enhancing "Ma Bell's" technological position in the field of telecommunications and solving her operating problems of a technical, hardware nature.

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Statement of Significance: Westbeth

The accomplishments of the Bell Telephone Laboratories have been truly remarkable. Technological breakthroughs, many of which were the results of pure science research, have included: high fidelity recording (1925); sound motion pictures (1926); television transmission (1927); color TV transmission (1929); coaxial cable carrier system (1929); radio astronomy (1933); digital computer (1938); transistor (1947); microwave radio relay system (1948); direct distance dialing (1951); silicon solar cell (1954); transocianic telephone cable (1956); lasers (1958); large superconducting magnets (1961); satellite communications (1962); and picturephone (1964).

The significance of theBell Telephone Laboratories in the history of science in the United States is that the company is pioneer role in industrial research. The lab was one of the first to demonstrate the intimate relationship between science and technology and industrial development.

The end of the 19th century witnessed the emergence of the basic institutions which have guided the American pursuit of science. The institutions, or estates of science, are the government, the universities, the foundations, and the industrial research laboratories. Industrial research laboratories developed first in those industries that owed their very existence to the scientific discoveries of the second half of the 19th century. Prominate among them were the chemical, pharmacutical, and petroleum industries as well as a wide variety of industries established to exploit the wonders of electricity. The telephone, Alexander Grahmn Bell's invention upon which the Bell System was built, was a child of electricity. Company officals early recognized that they must turn to science and technology to, in the terms of the period, improve the art of telephony. In establishing its own research laboratories, some company executives and almost all who directed and staffed the lab thought of themselves as disciples of the progress science and technology brings to all mankind. But the company also had a more direct interest in conducting its own research. By making its own discoveries, and not leaving them to the universities, let alone to other companies, AT&T would secure patent rights to new technologies which would enhance the company's market position and contribute to its growth. (The court battles over patent rights and infringements were especially brutal in the electrical industries.) The American system of free enterprise capitalism was thus joined to the pursuit of scientific knowledge as an integral part of industrial activity. Knowledge and the ability to "produce" it in the industrial research laboratory became a part of a company's capital assests. "Ma Bell's" growth into every area of the communication industry is testimony to the corporate advantages and wealth the company has reaped from its dedicated investment in research and development.

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Statement of Significance: Westbeth

The significance of the discoveries of the Bell Telephone Laboratories to American civilization and culture is apparent from the list of accomplishments noted above. From the telephone to satellites, from motions pictures to television, the discoveries of the Bell Labs dominate the telecommunication industries and have had a fundamental impart on countless other industries. The nature of their impact on American culture and civilization, their human effect, significance, and meaning, has become an integral part of social and cultural study and criticism of this century. Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, pholosophers, artists, literary critics, and culture critics of every taste and prejudice have continuously examined and reexamined, interpreted and reinterpreted, the human meaning of the revolution in telecommunications which the Bell Telephone Laboratories has led since its beginning in 1907. Some claim the quailty of our civilization as well as our standard of material well being have been infinitely raised. Others deride the whole venture as an exercise in dehumanization, alienation, or vulgarization. But all agree that the revolution in telecommunications has significantly affected American economic, social, political, and cultural reality. In its research and development activities the Bell Telephone Laboratories have been in the technological forefront of this transformation.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Horace Coon, American Telephone and Telegraph, (New York, 1939).
Edward B. Craft, "The Bell System Research Laboratories," Electrical Communication Vol. 2 (January, 1924).
George H. Daniels, Science in American Society. (New York, 1971).

(Continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A			
B			
C			
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: James Sheire, Historian — DATE: 3/5/75

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service — TELEPHONE:

STREET & NUMBER: 1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington — STATE: D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE — DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Research--A National Resource, "Industrial Research," (Washington, 1941).

Don Woodford, "Parnassus on the Hudson," Bell Telephone Magazine, July/August 1970.