

130-132 WEST 18TH STREET STABLES Building, 130-132 West 18th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1864-65. Architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 793, Lot 56.

On September 11, 1990, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 130-132 West 18th Street Stable and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 17). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has received two letters in support of designation.¹

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The two stables at Nos. 130 and 132 West 18th Street -- units of an original row of thirteen brick-fronted stables erected in 1864-66 of which nine survive -- were joined in 1907 to create the present building. Though joined at the ground story, the two facades retain their individual identity at the second story and remain largely intact. Designed in a round-arched utilitarian style related to the German Rundbogenstil, they feature a mix of Romanesque and Renaissance Revival details. Each unit of the 130-132 West 18th Street building has a tripartite triumphal arch composition which focuses on a central bifurcated Renaissance arch at the second story. Originally built for wealthy businessmen, the two stables had several prominent owners, among them Civil War hero, Major Theodore K. Gibbs, and Nathaniel McCready, founder of the Old Dominion Steamship Line. As a component of one of the two uniformly designed mid-nineteenth-century private carriage house groups remaining in Manhattan, the 130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building is a rare survivor. These stable rows reflect a period in the city's developmental history when private carriage houses began to be erected some blocks away from their owners' homes, on streets devoted almost exclusively to private stables and commercial liveries. An early manifestation of this trend, which became common practice during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the West 18th Street row was one of the most extensive of the period and contained unusually large and handsomely decorated stables.

The Tonnele Estate and the Development of the Private Stables on West 18th Street

Once part of the eighteenth-century farm of Peter Warren, the lots on the south side of West 18th Street between Sixth Avenue and the old Warren Road to the west were acquired by John Tonnele around 1817. Senior partner

in the firm of Tonnele & Hall, the country's leading dealer in wool, Tonnele had extensive real estate holdings in Manhattan including large tracts on Sixth Avenue, 14th and 15th, and 17th and 18th Streets.² In his will of 1846, Tonnele divided his real estate among his family, giving them the option of selling the property and investing the proceeds in trust for their heirs. A total of thirty-two lots on West 17th and 18th Streets were left to his daughter Susan G. Hall. In March of 1863, she and the executors of the estate, her husband Valentine G. Hall and his brother George Hall, began selling her lots which were then occupied by small dwellings and wood shanties. As the area was semi-industrial in character, with a brewery located on the north side of 18th Street and the Weber piano factory occupying the northeast corner of Seventh Avenue and 17th Street, the Halls must have regarded the lots as unsuitable for first-class residential or commercial development. However, the lots' proximity to the fashionable Fifth Avenue residential district north of Union Square must have made them seem ideal for private stables and apparently they were offered for sale as such. By 1867, all the former Tonnele Estate lots on 17th and 18th Streets were occupied by private stables with restrictive covenants on the properties prohibiting their conversion to factories or commercial livery stables.

Stables were a necessity during the period when private urban transportation was limited to horses and carriages.³ While the majority of New Yorkers rented or boarded their horses in large commercial stables, the very wealthy maintained private stables. (Since private stables invariably provided storage space for carriages, the terms carriage house and private stable are used interchangeably hereafter.) Traditionally, these were located directly behind their owners' houses, sometimes facing onto the less desirable street front of a through-the-block lot. By the mid-nineteenth century, carriage-house rows developed to serve a few of the city's most exclusive streets. Remnants of these stable rows survive at 127 and 129 East 19th Street, originally part of a group of stables serving the houses on Gramercy Park South and Irving Place,⁴ and at 57 Great Jones Street, the sole survivor of a long row of stables which once backed onto the mansions on the north side of Bond Street between Broadway and Lafayette Street.⁵ Around 1860, carriage houses began to be erected a few blocks from their owners' homes, on convenient but less fashionable streets, where land costs were lower and where the noises and smells associated with stables would not mar the character of a residential neighborhood. Eventually a number of streets in Manhattan were devoted almost exclusively to private and livery stables. These included East 35th and East 36th Streets between Lexington and Third Avenues (developed largely in the 1860s and 1870s), East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues (stables erected between 1883 and 1904), and West 58th Street between Broadway and Seventh Avenue (stables erected c. 1885-1905).⁶ The twenty-nine stables erected on the former Tonnele Estate in the 1860s, extending from 121 to 143 West 17th Street and from 112 to 146 West 18th Street, were an early example of this type of development and together formed one of the most extensive groups of private stables built in Manhattan in the 1860s.

It should be noted that throughout the 1860s, most of the private carriage houses on these "stable streets" were commissioned on an individual

basis and that speculatively-built rows were a rarity.⁷ Perhaps the most extensive speculative development was Sniffen Court, a group of ten private carriage houses on a blind alley off East 36th Street, erected in 1864 for four investors by local builder John Sniffin, and subsequently sold to wealthy residents of Murray Hill.⁸ Although uniform in design, the row from 122 to 146 West 18th Street was created through a combination of small-scale speculative development and individual commissions. In May and June of 1864, Elisha Brooks, a partner in the successful Brooks Brothers clothing firm, purchased the lots from 122 to 126 West 18th Street and had three identical stables erected on the site.⁹

As work was proceeding on the Brooks stables, Susan Hall and her children agreed to use part of the proceeds from the sale of the lots on 18th Street to build a stable at 128 West 18th Street which would be retained for the family's use.¹⁰ Though commissioned by a different client, this stable was identical in plan and design to the recently completed Brooks stables. By 1866, the nine remaining lots extending from 130 to 146 West 18th Street had been sold. Their new owners also had stables erected which followed the articulation established by the Brooks stables creating a uniform row of thirteen stables.¹¹ This would suggest that Brooks had made the plans for his stables available to the other owners and/or that the same builder or architect was commissioned for all thirteen buildings. The result was one of the most extensive stable rows in the city, containing unusually large and handsomely decorated buildings whose owners included a number of New York's wealthiest and most prominent citizens, among them Samuel F.B. Morse who was the original owner of the stable at 144 West 18th Street (demolished).

The stable at 130 West 18th Street was constructed in 1864-65 for Wilmot Johnson, a resident of Albany, who owned a coal company with offices in New York at 111 Broadway.¹² Soon after its completion Johnson sold the stable to Walter S. Gurnee, a midwesterner who had made a fortune in the tannery business and railroads in Chicago before moving to New York in 1863 where he operated an investment banking firm and served on the board of several mining and metal processing companies.¹³ Gurnee retained the 18th Street stable for three years while he was living at 33 West 20th Street. The stable was then purchased by Henry T. Helmbold, described by nineteenth-century diarist George Templeton Strong as a "sporting druggist ... [who] is said to have acquired a vast fortune by pictorial advertisements."¹⁴ Helmbold also retained the stable for about three years, selling it in 1871 to Major Theodore K. Gibbs, who resided nearby at 62 West 21st Street.

A descendent of a prominent and wealthy Rhode Island family, Theodore Kane Gibbs was born in Newport in 1840.¹⁵ His father William Channing Gibbs was a leader in the public affairs of the state who had served as a member of the state assembly, chief magistrate, and governor from 1820 to 1824. Theodore K. Gibbs was raised in Newport and entered the army as a young man during the Civil War. He served with distinction, was twice wounded, and twice decorated for bravery. Following the war, he enlisted in the regular army and while stationed on Staten Island married Virginia Barrett. The Gibbsses maintained homes in New York and on Gibbs Avenue in Newport. They

were active in society and were known for "giving liberally of their large means." ¹⁶

The stable at 132 West 18th Street was built in 1864-65 for John R. Garland, a broker who headed his own firm on William Street and resided at 28 West 21st Street. In 1868, the building was acquired by Nathaniel L'Hommedieu McCready, president of the Old Dominion Steamship Line, who lived at 10 West 22nd Street.¹⁷ A leader in the shipping industry in New York, McCready had entered the business in 1840 at the age of nineteen, organizing his own firm, the N.L. McCready Company, which he ran successfully until 1865. He then formed a partnership with Livingston, Fox & Company, owners of several steamship lines. In 1867, he organized the Old Dominion Line which operated a fleet of steamships between New York and the Virginia ports of Norfolk, Newport News, Richmond, and West Point. McCready served as president of the line until his death in 1887; he was also president of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad for fourteen years.

Following her husband's death Caroline Waldron McCready retained ownership of 132 West 18th Street which continued to function as a private stable. In 1895, the building was remodeled to accommodate horses on the second floor.¹⁸ Four years later Mrs. McCready sold the building to Theodore K. Gibbs who retained ownership of both 130 and 132 West 18th Street until his death in 1906.

The Design of the 130 and 132 West 18th Street Stables

Originally units of a stable row, the stables at 130 and 132 West 18th Street are characteristic of nineteenth carriage house design as adapted to a narrow urban lot. Typically, such stables would have been divided into two major ground-floor spaces -- a front room for carriages and a rear room with stalls for horses. The front portion of the second floor would have contained quarters for the coachman or groom, while the rear would have been used as a hayloft. Windows were restricted to the front of the building to spare neighbors the sights and smells associated with horses, but two large skylights provided additional light to the second-floor rooms.

The facades of the two buildings were designed in a round-arched utilitarian style derived from the German Rundbogenstil (round-arch style). The Rundbogenstil evolved in Germany in the 1820s among a group of progressive architects who sought to create a synthesis of classical and medieval architecture by drawing on historic precedents in the round-arched Byzantine, Romanesque, and Renaissance styles.¹⁹ Transmitted to this country through the immigration of German and Central European architects in the 1840s, as well as through architectural publications, the Rundbogenstil tended to be conflated with other mid-nineteenth century round-arched styles such as the Romanesque and Renaissance Revivals. Among the major American examples of the round-arched style are Charles Blesch and Leopold Eidlitz's St. George's Church (1846-56) on Stuyvesant Square at 16th Street, Alexander Saeltzler's Astor Library (1849-53, later additions 1859, 1881), at 425 Lafayette Street,²⁰ and Thomas Tefft's Union Depot, Providence, R.I. (1847, demolished). The style is reflected in the design of the West 18th Street stables by the choice of materials (unstuccoed brick and locally available

sandstone), by the emphasis on flat wall surfaces, and by the clear definition of architectural elements. The meshing of classical and medieval motifs is apparent in the tripartite composition for each unit, which recalls both a Roman triumphal arch and the elevation of a medieval nave arcade, and in the incorporation of such details as the Renaissance-inspired cornice and diamond-pointed keystones and the Romanesque-inspired arcades and rusticated bands. The chief feature of each facade is a large central arch containing a pair of inscribed arches and a bull's-eye tympanum. This motif, which was thought by nineteenth-century theorists to have originated in northern Italy during the Romanesque period and was widely used during the Renaissance, became a hallmark of the nineteenth-century round-arched styles, both here and in Germany.

Interestingly, the only other remaining group of mid-nineteenth century carriage houses in Manhattan, located at Sniffen Court, is also designed in a round-arched style and features a triumphal arch composition with arched windows and doors flanking a central two-story arch. At 18th Street, the stables are larger and more elaborate in design.

In addition to its ties to the round-arched style, the design of the stables at 130 and 132 West 18th Street is distinguished by its skillful superimposition of recessed and projected planes. The double-height arcade of each facade, carried on slender projected piers, is on a forward plane, while the wall membrane with its door and window openings is recessed. A series of horizontal moldings break forward over the piers to unite the two planes. The moldings at the arches' impostes at the second story form the capitals for two pilaster orders (a major order which articulates the piers, and a minor order which frames the windows). In addition to their function in the design of these individual units, the repeated use of horizontal elements and the alternation of large and small arches are important elements in creating a strong sense of rhythm and harmony within the row.

Description

Two components of a uniformly designed stable row were joined in 1907 to create the building at 130-132 West 18th Street which has a frontage of forty-three feet on West 18th Street and has been extended from its original depth of eighty-one feet to occupy the entire length of its ninety-two-foot-deep lot. Though joined on the ground story, the two facades retain much of their individual identity. Faced with brick and brownstone they are designed in a round-arched style that incorporates Romanesque and Renaissance details. Each facade is organized in a tripartite triumphal arch composition that focuses on a double-width center bay. At the ground story, the bays are articulated by projected piers. Originally, the wide center bay of each building contained a pair of wood carriage doors, the eastern bay had an arched entrance, and the western bays had an arched window. The arches were ornamented by diamond-pointed keystones and stone bands ran across the facade at the sill, watertable, impost, and cornice lines. Today, the eastern bay (at No. 130) remains relatively intact, although the entrance has been enlarged somewhat to accommodate a metal door. In the center bay of No. 130 the paired carriage doors have been replaced by two arched windows with metal grilles; the windows are supported

by a wood bulkhead and surmounted by multipane transoms. At watertable level the stone bands ornamenting the piers have been cut flush with the brickwork. When No. 130 and No. 132 were joined in 1907, the end piers in the west bay at No. 130 and the east bay of No. 132 were removed to create a vehicle entrance. At that time cast-iron supports were installed next to the brick piers and steel girders were inserted above the old center bay at No. 130 and new vehicle entrance (now occupied by wood infill and a metal door). The girders are currently covered with stucco, as are the rusticated blocks above the piers. The cornice that separated the two stories has been removed.

On the western portion of the facade (at No. 132) the ground story has been extensively altered. In addition to the changes in the east bay, the piers flanking the original vehicle entrance have been replaced and a steel beam has been inserted above the entrance. This necessitated the removal of the stone cornice which once capped the first story; the area above the vehicle entrance is now stuccoed. In the west bay, the arched surround has been removed and the window opening has been enlarged to create a doorway. The wall surface is covered with sheet metal. The opening contains a metal and glass door surmounted by narrow transom. The paired carriage doors in the center bay have also been replaced by a garage door.

The second story of the facade at 130 West 18th Street remains virtually intact. Here the piers carry an arcade in which the center arch is both wider and taller than the flanking arches. The arches are set-off by stone diamond-pointed keystones and stone sills beneath the windows. Stone bands, which break forward over the piers at the impost line of the arches, form the capitals for two pilaster orders -- a major order articulating the arcade and a minor order framing the windows. A small pilaster bisects the center bay into a pair of arched windows which are topped by a molded wood surround that features a central bull's-eye. All of the window openings contain original wood frames and four-over-four double-hung sash. This section of the facade is crowned by a simple molded brick entablature.

On the second story of the portion of the facade at No. 132 the articulation of the facade at No. 130 is repeated. The facade remains largely intact; however, only the east window bay retains its original sash and a fire escape has been added at the west window.

Subsequent History

In the 1870s and 1880s, the neighborhood to the east of the stables on 18th Street, which had once been exclusively residential, became the heart of New York's chief shopping district as the retail trade expanded along Broadway, Sixth Avenue, and 14th and 23rd Streets. At least two of the stables were sold to neighboring businesses in the 1880s and by the first decade of the twentieth century all were being used for commercial or manufacturing purposes. This change in the character of the neighborhood was coupled with the advent of the automobile.

The forerunners of the modern automobile had developed in Europe in the last decades of the of the nineteenth century.²¹ By the 1890s horseless carriages were being manufactured in the United States, and in the first decade of the twentieth century they became a major means of transport for the rich. In 1907, the year following the death of Theodore K. Gibbs, the buildings at 130 and 132 West 18th Street were acquired by the Metropolis Security Company and leased to T.J. Gerome for conversion to an automobile repair garage.²² At that time the buildings were joined and a portion of the front wall was taken down and supported on steel beams. The inclusion of a drafting room on the second floor gives some indication of how very specialized auto repair must have been during this period. From documents filed with the Department of Buildings,²³ it would appear that the building remained in use as a garage through the mid-twentieth century. Fires in 1914 and 1946 made alterations to the ground story necessary; however, the second story is largely intact. Today, the 130-132 West 18th Street stables building is a component of one of the two remaining mid-nineteenth century carriage house groups in Manhattan and is distinguished by its design which provides a notable example of the round-arched style as applied to a utilitarian building type.

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NOTES

1. On June 10, 1986, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 130-132 West 18th Street Stables (LP-1604, Item No. 25); the building was one of seven stable buildings, from No. 126 to No. 140-142 West 18th Street, each being heard as an individual item. Six witnesses spoke in favor of designation of the related items. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The Landmarks Preservation Commission received one letter in support of the designation of the stable buildings at No. 126 to No. 140-142 West 18th Street at the time of the first hearing.
2. For Tonnele see Moses Y. Beach, Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of New York City, ... estimated to be worth \$100,000, and upwards... (1845), reprinted in Henry Wysham Lanier, A Century of Banking (New York, 1922), 29; New York County, Surrogates Office, Wills, Liber 98, p. 294. For his real estate holdings see New York County, Office of the Register, "Block Index to Conveyances," Block 793; "Map of the Property of John Tonnele, in the Ninth and Sixteenth Wards," File Map 128; Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 875, p. 62; Liber 913, p. 413; and New York City, Tax Assessment Records, Sixteenth Ward, 1863-67.
3. This section on the development of private stables in New York is based on an examination of contemporary atlases including Maps of the City of New York (New York, 1853-54); Plan of the City of New York (New York, 1867); Insurance Maps of the City of New York (New York, 1868-69), vols. 3 and 4; Atlas of the Entire City of New York (New York, 1879); Atlas of the City of New York and Part of the Bronx (New York, 1885); Atlas of the City of New York (Philadelphia, 1891-94).
4. No. 127 was built with the house at 66 Irving Place for W.S. Johnson in 1853-54; No. 129 was erected for J. Cooper Lord in 1860-61. Both buildings are within the Gramercy Park Historic District.
5. Other carriage house groups were located on the north side of West 13th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues (serving houses on the south side of 14th Street) and on the south side of East 18th Street between Broadway and Park Avenue South (serving the mansions on Union Square North). The depth of the two blocks between Washington Square North and East 8th Street permitted the owners of the houses on those streets to have alleys opened in the middle of each block and private carriage houses constructed on what became Washington Mews and MacDougal Alley, now in the Greenwich Village Historic District.
6. The stables at 166 to 174, 178 to 180, 161 to 167, and 173 East 73rd Street are designated New York City Landmarks, as is the (former) Helen Miller Gould Stable at 213 West 58th Street.

7. For example the New York City Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building Dockets, list only seven applications for speculator-built private stable rows between 1866 and 1868. Most of these were small developments containing only two or three buildings.
8. For Sniffen Court see Landmarks Preservation Commission, Sniffen Court Historic District Designation Report (LP-0249, 1966). Sniffin was also the designer and co-developer with Joseph W. Duryee of a pair of "first-class private stables" at 55 and 57 West 41st Street in 1867 (demolished).
9. Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 914, p. 192.
10. Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 913, p. 413. Subsequent transactions are recorded in the "Block Index to Conveyances." See also the Tax Assessment Records for the Sixteenth Ward, 1863-67.
11. This design was limited to the stables at No. 122 to No. 146 West 18th Street. Other surviving stables which had been erected on the former Tonnele lots vary in their articulation.
12. For early property records concerning 130 West 18th Street see Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 931, p. 41; Liber 946, p. 48; Liber 1113, p. 362; Liber 1187, p. 362. Occupations are from Trow's Directory, 1865/1866, 1873/1874.
13. Walter S. Gurnee obituary, New York Times, April 18, 1903, p. 2.
14. George Templeton Strong, The Diary of George Templeton Strong, 1835-75, eds. Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (New York, 1952), vol. 3, p. 254.
15. For Gibbs see Theodore K. Gibbs obituary, New York Times, Jan. 17, 1909, p. 11; George Gibbs, The Gibbs Family of Rhode Island and Related Families (New York, 1933), 57, 115-16; Walter W. Spooner, Historic Families of America (New York, 1907), vol. 1, pp. 170-71; The Biographical Cyclopedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island (Providence, 1881), 235.
16. Gibbs, 116.
17. This section on Nathaniel McCready is based on Nathaniel L. McCready obituary, New York Times, Oct. 10, 1887, p. 5; Leslie's History of the Greater New York (New York, 1898), vol. 3, pp. 16-19.
18. New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Alteration Application, 571-1895.
19. For the Rundbogenstil and its American manifestations see Kathleen Curran, "The German Rundbogenstil and Reflections on the American Round-Arched Style," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 48 (Dec., 1988), 351-73; and Arabella Berkenbilt, "European Influences on Thomas A. Tefft; Theory and Practice," in Thomas Alexander Tefft:

American Architecture in Transition, 1845-1860 (Providence, 1988), 35-41.

20. St. George's and the former Astor Library, now the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, are designated New York City Landmarks.
21. This section on early automobiles is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, 177-179 East 73rd Street Building Designation Report (LP-1065), prepared by Andrew Dolkart (New York, 1980).
22. Alteration Application, 840-1907.
23. Alteration Application, 2038-1914; Building Notice 205-1946.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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 130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as a part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the 130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building was created in 1907 from two units of an original row of thirteen brick-fronted stables (nine survive) erected in 1864-66; that the two facades retain their individual identity at the second story and remain largely intact; that they were designed in a round-arched utilitarian style related to the German Rundbogenstil and incorporate Romanesque and Renaissance Revival details; that each of the individual units of the 130-132 West 18th Street building has a tripartite triumphal arch composition which focuses on a central bifurcated Renaissance arch at the second story; that the 130 and 132 West 18th Street stables were built for wealthy businessmen and had several notable owners, among them Major Theodore K. Gibbs and Nathaniel McCreedy, founder of the Old Dominion Line; that the 130-132 West 18th Street Building is a component of one of the two remaining uniformly designed mid-nineteenth-century private carriage house groups in Manhattan and as such is a rare survivor; that these stable rows are a reminder of a period in the city's developmental history when private carriage houses began to be erected some blocks away from their owners' homes, on streets devoted almost exclusively to private stables and commercial liveries; that the construction of these buildings and the other stables in the row was an early manifestation of this trend which became common practice during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; and that the 18th Street stable row was one of the most extensive of the period and contained unusually large and handsome stables.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21), of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building, 130-132 West 18th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 793, Lot 56 as its Landmark Site.

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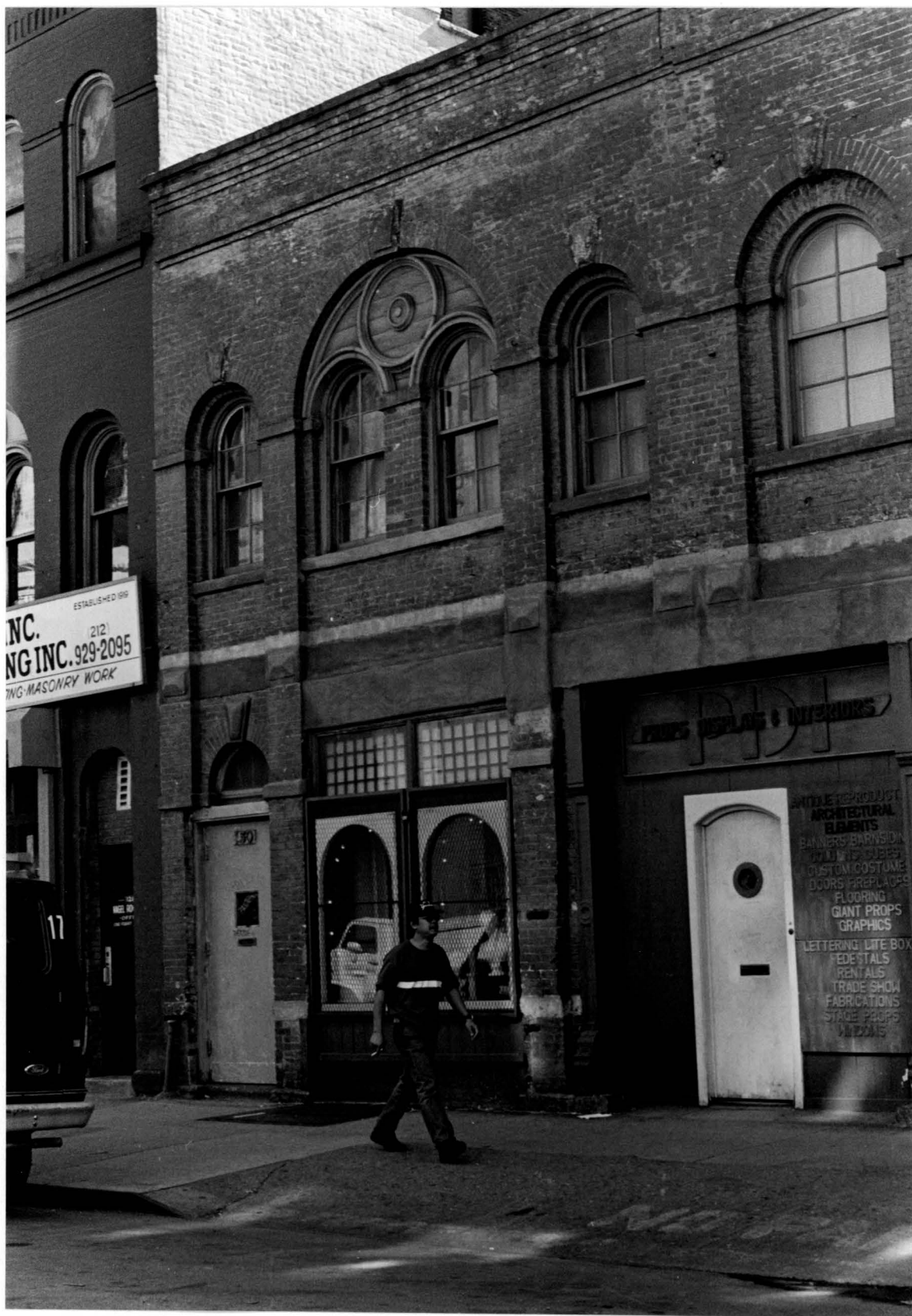
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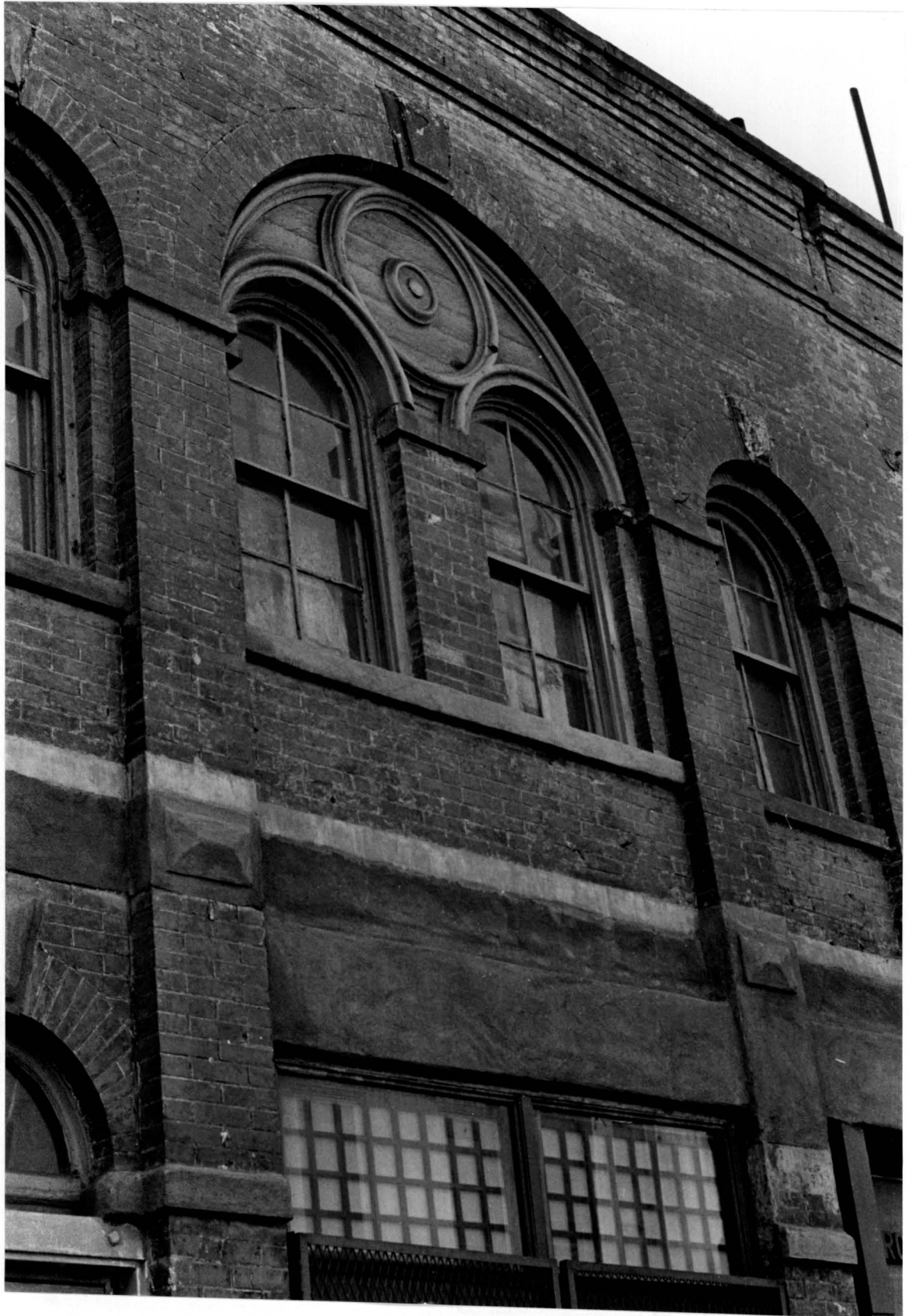


130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building, 130-132 West 18th Street (1864-65)

Photo Credit: Gale Harris



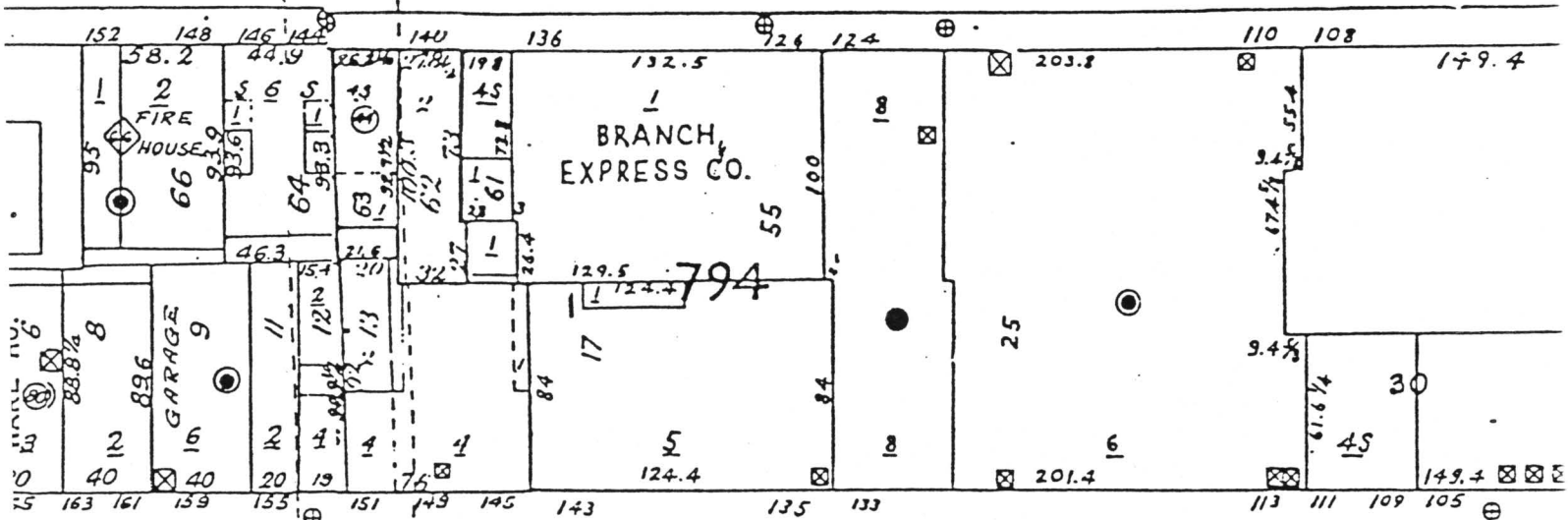
130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building (No. 130)
Photo Credit: Gale Harris



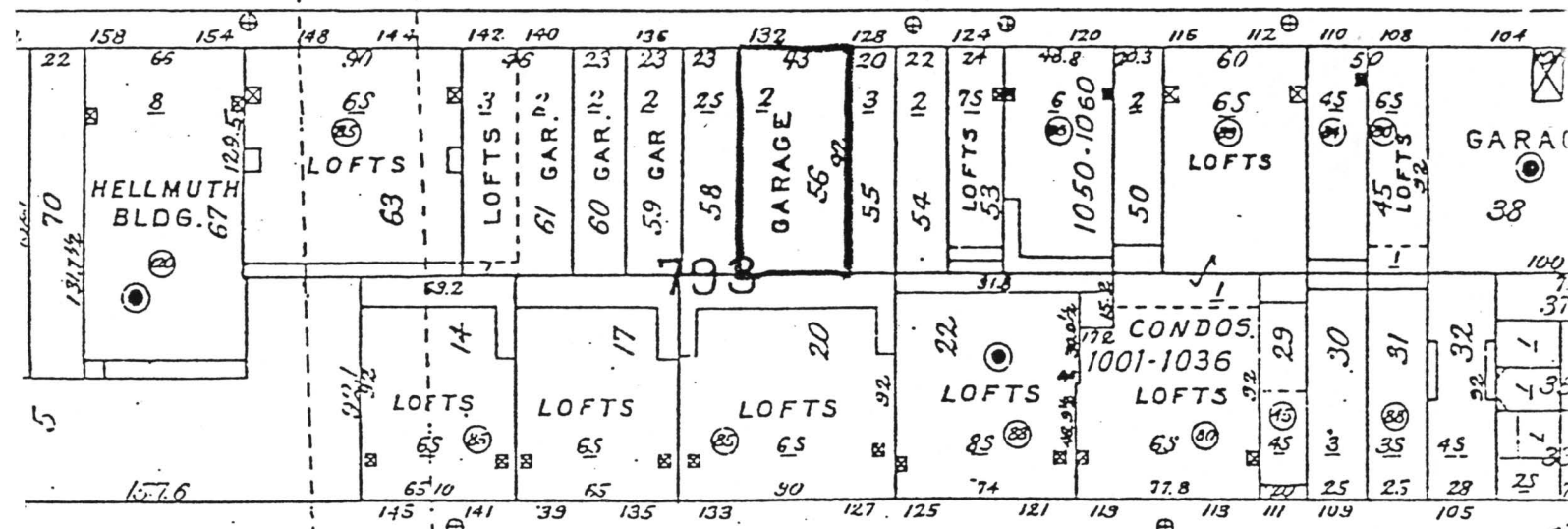
130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building (detail No. 130)
Photo Credit: Gale Harris



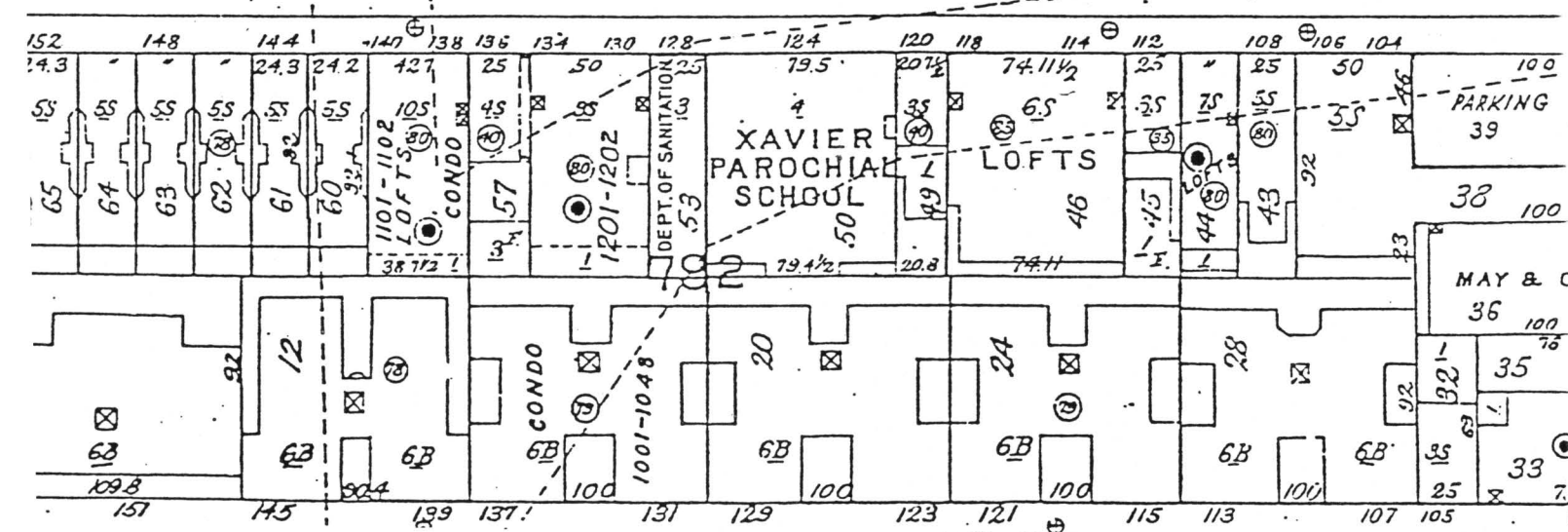
130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building (No. 132)
Photo Credit: Gale Harris



W. 18TH



W. 17TH



130-132 West 18th Street Stables Building, 130-132 West 18th Street (Landmark Site)
Credit: Sanborn Manhattan Land Book, 1989-90