

Jonathan W. Allen Stable

148 East 40th Street, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1871; builder Charles E. Hadden.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 895, Lot 60.

On November 19, 1996, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Jonathan W. Allen Stable and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 6). There were five speakers in favor of designation. The hearing was continued until January 14, 1997 (Item No. 3). At this time there was one speaker in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation at either hearing. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The Commission has also received numerous letters in support of designation. The current owner has expressed his concerns orally about the proposed designation.

Summary

This small structure was built as a private stable for Jonathan W. Allen in 1871 by Charles Hadden, a builder who was active in New York at the time. Allen was a broker who lived on East 42nd Street and wanted a stable convenient to his home. This unusual, two-story building with its mansard roof, large dormers, and delicate iron cresting is a rare survivor from that period of New York's history when horses were a vital part of everyday life and their care and housing were an integral part of the development of the city.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Murray Hill¹

The area known today as Murray Hill is bounded roughly by 34th Street on the south, 40th Street on the north, Fifth Avenue on the west, and Third Avenue on the east. Murray Hill took its name from the country estate of Robert and Mary Murray whose farm comprised a large hill. According to legend, during the Revolutionary War, Mary Murray invited the British General Howe and his troops to her house (which stood approximately at the corner of what is today Park Avenue and East 37th Street) for a meal, thus allowing General George Washington's army to escape to the north.

The character of the neighborhood was determined in 1847 when local landowners signed a covenant stipulating that only brick or stone houses of two or more stories could be erected in the area.² Shortly thereafter, many homes of wealthy and socially prominent people began to appear along Fifth and Madison Avenues. The Gothic Revival villa of Coventry Waddell, had already been constructed on Fifth Avenue between 37th and 38th Streets in 1844. This, along with the Samuel P. Townsend mansion on Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, built in 1853-55, set the tone for future development. In the 1860s, A.T. Stewart purchased the Townsend mansion, to replace it with his own extravagant marble-fronted, mansarded dwelling. The choicest lots were soon occupied by families such as the Belmonts, Rhinelanders, Tiffanys, Havemeyers, and Morgans.

Eastward development of the neighborhood started after Lexington and Fourth Avenues were opened in 1848, and expanded further after 1852 when the New York and Harlem Railroad stopped running steam engines south of 42nd Street, and the below-grade cuts of Park Avenue were filled in with a series of landscaped strips. The cross streets, proceeding eastward from Fifth Avenue, were developed with rowhouses, which became more modest the further they were located from Fifth Avenue. The block east of Lexington Avenue even had service buildings set among the modest houses. Many houses in Murray Hill, however, were designed (or sometimes remodeled) by prominent architects in the high styles of their period, including the 1894 Beaux-Arts alteration by Carrère & Hastings of an 1857 rowhouse at 117 East 35th Street, the J. Hampden Robb House at 23 Park Avenue by McKim, Mead & White of 1889-90, and the 1869 Italianate townhouse at 31 East 38th Street,

designed by William Easterbrook and owned by William R. Grace while he was mayor of New York. The Murray Hill Hotel, on Park Avenue and East 40th Street became a well-known meeting place for New Yorkers and famous visitors such as President Grover Cleveland and Mark Twain.

After the turn of the century, when retailing began to move into Murray Hill along Fifth Avenue, many of New York's wealthy families relocated their residences further north.³ In 1914, as many single-family residences were divided into multiple-dwelling units and apartment houses began to be constructed, the Murray Hill Association was formed (with J.P. Morgan as one of its directors) with the intention of preserving the exclusive residential character of the neighborhood.

Stables

Horses were a vital part of the life and economy of New York until the early years of the twentieth century. Horses were used to pull omnibuses, firefighting equipment, and delivery wagons, as well as private carriages which transported people around the city. In 1896, it was reported that there were 4,649 stables in New York City, accommodating 73,746 horses.⁴ These included the private stables maintained by wealthy families for their own use, as well as large stables for the horses and equipment of peddlers and delivery services, stables maintained by riding schools, stables owned by horsecar companies, as well as commercial stables for individuals to board their own horses or to rent horses and carriages.

After around 1860 in New York City, it became common for stables, whether private or commercial, to be located in less expensive areas, a block or more away from prime residential sections, and often grouped together to create a mews.⁵ A location convenient to, but somewhat removed from individual houses also kept the smells and noises associated with the animals away from the exclusive living quarters of wealthy New Yorkers.

The Allen Stable

This small stable on East 40th Street was constructed for Jonathan W. Allen, a broker living at 18 East 42nd Street, east of Fifth Avenue. Allen had purchased this eighteen-foot-wide lot on

February 22, 1871,⁶ and filed the application to build in March.⁷ At the time, the area of 40th Street, east of Lexington Avenue, was fully developed with small brick houses as well as factories, stables, and breweries.⁸ This location was convenient to Allen's residence on 42nd Street, and practical since there were already three other stables on the street.

Allen chose Charles E. Hadden to design his new stable. A builder rather than an architect, Hadden maintained an office on West Broadway (then known as Laurens Street) and worked on buildings in various parts of New York. Those still extant include store and loft buildings in what are now the Tribeca East Historic District and the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District, as well as residential structures in Greenwich Village (outside the boundaries of the historic district). The dates associated with these buildings indicate that Hadden was active in construction in Manhattan from the 1860s through the 1890s.

In an arrangement typical for private stables at the time, the building was designed with room for Allen's carriage and horses on the ground floor and living space for the groom on the second floor. On the exterior, Hadden used a variety of forms from styles popular at the time. The mansard roof with its bold, pedimented dormers is perhaps the most obvious feature of the facade. Brought to the United States from France where it was favored during the time of Louis Napoleon, the mansard roof, which suggested the most modern and up-to-date style of the 1860s and early 1870s, was added to almost any kind of building. The Second Empire style, as buildings with this type of roof were called, became extremely popular in New York. Other details seen on this building, including the incised brick panels to the outside of the smaller doors, those above the three openings, and the incised pilasters flanking the dormer windows suggest the neo-Grec style of building, also seen on many New York buildings during the 1870s. The delicate iron cresting which crowns the roof adds a further picturesque element to the facade, a quality highly prized on buildings of the period. The boldly contrasting stonework on the narrow pilasters of the ground story and on the outlined panel above it indicate the vernacular origin of this building.

Description

This two-story stable building features a ground story which is three bays wide and faced with brick

and accented by stone. The central opening, originally the carriage entrance, has historic, wood-paneled, double doors with glass in the top half. These doors are set beneath a segmental, brick arch with a contrasting stone keystone, and are flanked by two narrow, wood-paneled doors. One of these originally led to the living quarters, located on the second story. Each narrow door has a glass and wood transom under a round brick arch. Between the three openings are narrow pilasters faced with alternating panels of brick and white stone blocks. To the outside of each narrow door, is another narrow pilaster, formed by an incised brick panel with stone blocks above and below it. Above the three openings are three incised brick panels, each outlined by contrasting stone and reflecting the shape of the openings below them. The ground story is topped by a bracketed iron cornice. A slate-covered mansard roof rises above this. Narrow stone strips mark the ends of the roof, each topped by a stone finial incised with a neo-Grec type motif. Along the top edge of the roof is a delicate iron cresting in a scroll design. The mansard is pierced by two round-headed dormer windows, each with its original wood-sash, two-over-two window. Narrow, wood-paneled pilasters flank each of the windows which are capped by segmentally-arched pediments carried on wooden consoles.

Subsequent History

The stable built by Jonathan Allen was owned by him and his heirs until 1919.⁹ During a succession of owners, several minor interior changes were carried out. A demolition permit, approved in 1928 but not acted upon, indicates the building was still a stable at that time.¹⁰ Most surviving private stables, had been converted long before this for use as garages, as cars replaced horses, eliminating the need for such facilities. By 1946 the building had been converted to commercial use, with a storage area on the ground story and an office above this. It has continued to be used for business purposes until the present time.

Report prepared by
Virginia Kurshan
Research Department

Notes

1. This brief history of Murray Hill has been compiled from the following sources: "Mrs. Murray Had A Farm..." *Herald Bicentennial Supplement* (July 2, 1976), 12; Charles Lockwood, *Manhattan Moves Uptown* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), 223-231; Frederick S. Lightfoot, ed., *Nineteenth-Century New York in Rare Photographic Views* (New York: Dover Publ., Inc., 1981), 100-110; M. Christine Boyer, *Manhattan Manners* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 134-135; and Anita Pins, *An Historic District in Murray Hill* (New York: The Murray Hill Committee, Inc., 1977), 9.
2. In addition to requiring quality construction, certain types of businesses were prohibited as well. No "livery stable, slaughter house, smith shop, forge..." was to be established there; as well as no manufacture of "gun powder, glue, vitriol, ink or turpentine." Also there was to be no tannery, no "brewery, distillery, museum, theater, circus..." Such restrictions were fairly common in many residential neighborhoods.
3. While the other families cited moved their residences further north, the Morgans stayed in Murray Hill. The J.P. Morgan, Jr. house is located at Madison Avenue and East 37th Street, and the library (a designated New York City Landmark), built to accommodate J.P. Morgan's vast art and literary collections, is located at Madison Avenue and East 36th Street.
4. Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1108.
5. Some Manhattan streets were devoted almost exclusively to private and livery stables. These included West 17th and West 18th Streets between Sixth and Seventh Avenues (constructed in the 1860s), 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). Of these, Nos. 126-132, 136, and 140 West 18th Street, Nos. 166-174, 178-180, 161-167, 173 East 73rd Street, and the Helen Miller Gould Stable at 213 West 58th Street are designated New York City Landmarks.
6. New York County, Office of the Registrar, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1165, Page 347.
7. New York City Department of Buildings, NB 466-1871.
8. *Atlas of the Entire City of New York* (New York: George W. Bromley and E. Robinson, 1879), Plate 18.
9. New York County Registrar's Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 3074, Page 361.
10. Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Plans, Permits and Applications, Demo 143 - 1928.

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 Jonathan W. Allen Stable has a special character, and a 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 the Jonathan W. Allen Stable was built in 1871 as a private stable for broker Jonathan W. Allen; that it was designed and constructed by builder Charles E. Hadden using a combination of popular building styles including the Second Empire and the neo-Grec; that the builder used this combination of styles and details, including a slate mansard roof, pedimented dormer windows and incised brick panels to create a lively and picturesque facade; that its location in fashionable Murray Hill, on a side street several blocks from its owner's residence, was useful for keeping horses convenient but not too near; that the building is a rare surviving stable, a reminder of that period of New York's history when horses played a vital part in the every day life of the city, and their care and housing was an integral part of the city's development.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 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 Jonathan W. Allen Stable, 148 East 40th Street, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 895, Lot 60 as its Landmark Site.



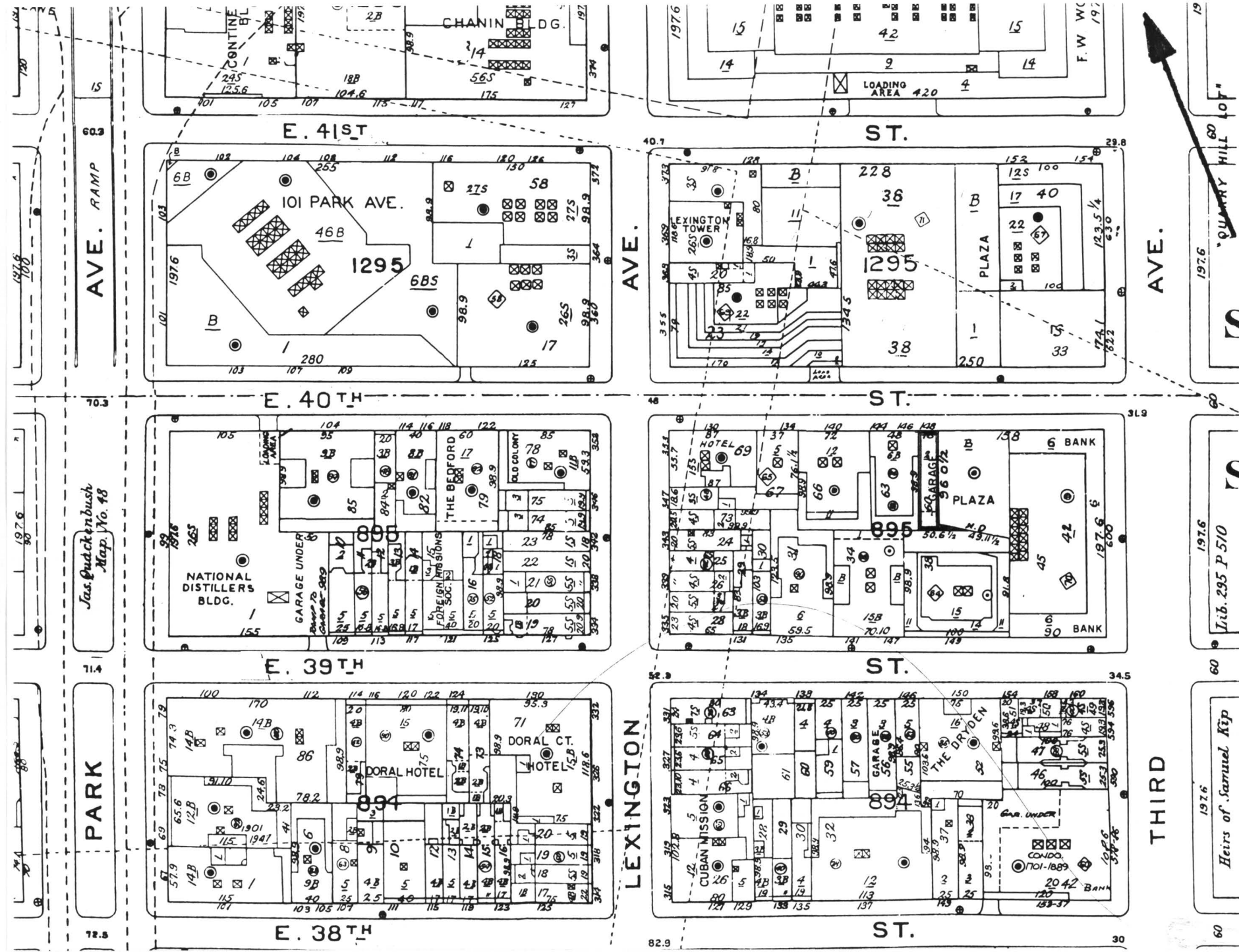
Jonathan W. Allen Stable, 148 East 40th Street, Manhattan
Photo: Carl Forster



Jonathan W. Allen Stable, first story detail
Photo: Carl Forster



Jonathan W. Allen Stable, second story detail
Photo: Carl Forster



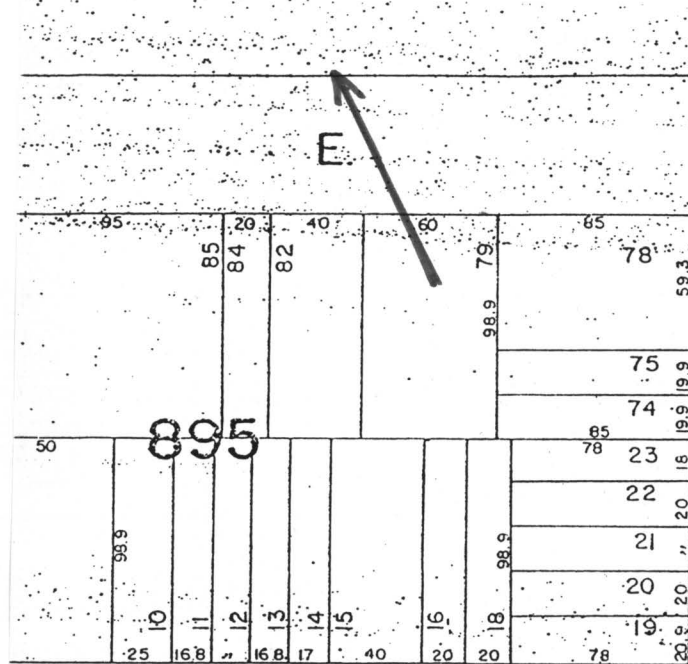
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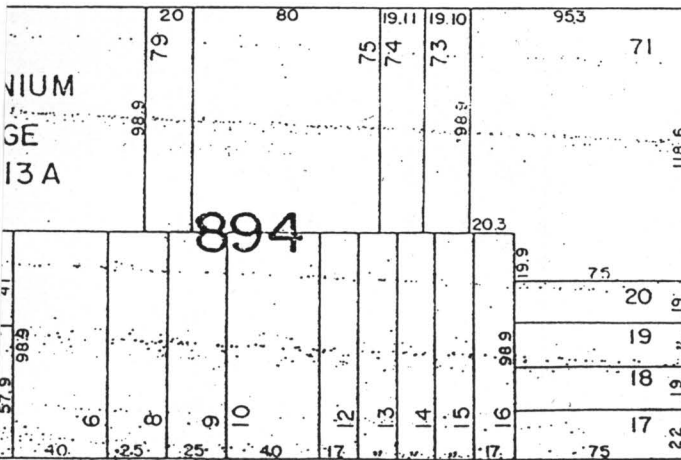
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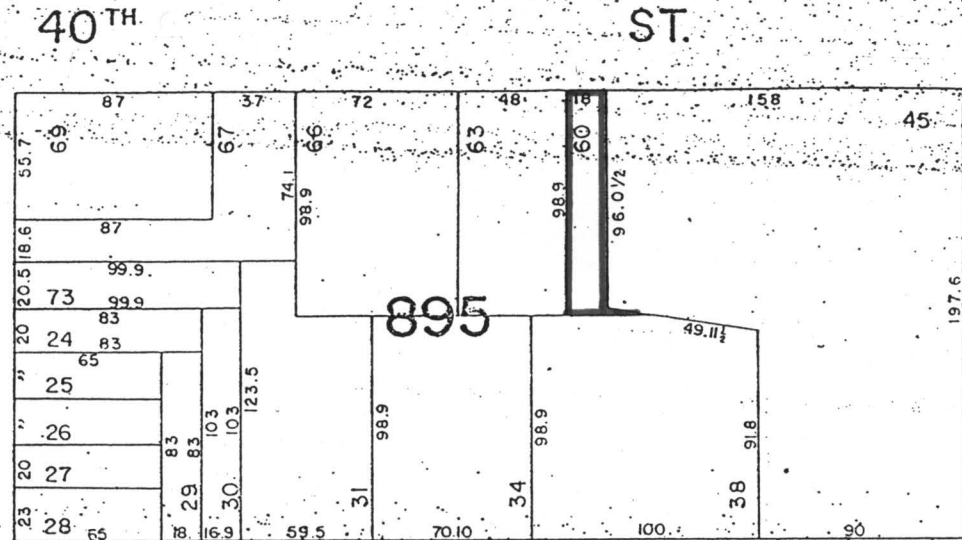
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Source: Sanborn Manhattan Landbook, 1996-97, pl.67



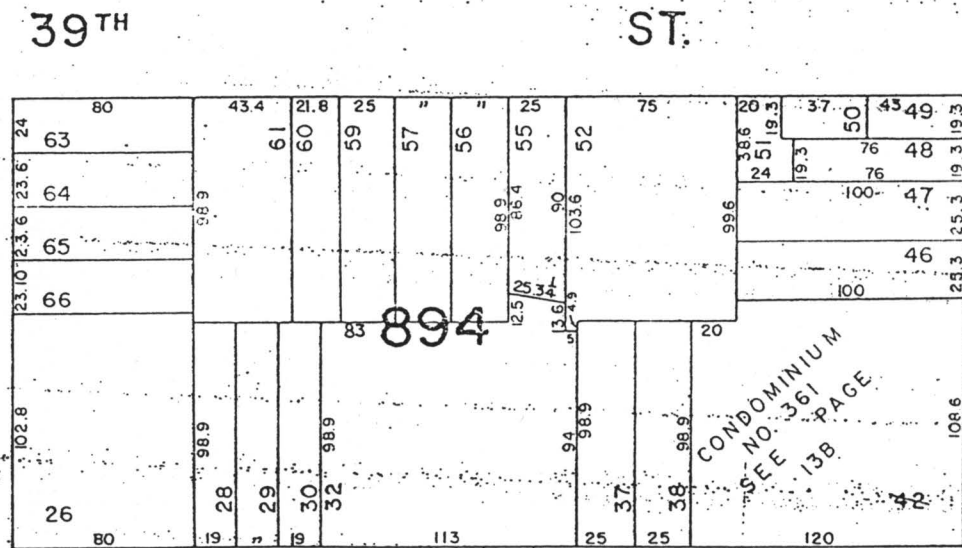
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LEXINGTON



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E. 40TH ST. E. 39TH ST. E. 38TH ST.

CONDOMINIUM
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