

**143 ALLEN STREET HOUSE**, 143 Allen Street, Manhattan  
Built c. 1830-31

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 415, Lot 23.

On June 23, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the 143 Allen Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 6). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Four people spoke in favor of designation, including a shareholder in the property and representatives of the Historic Districts Council and the Society for the Architecture of the City.

Summary

The Federal style row house at 143 Allen Street was constructed c. 1830-31 as a speculative investment by George Sutton, a ship captain and counting house merchant. Originally part of a group of six similar residences, it is located in the heart of what is now known as Manhattan's Lower East Side on land that was once part of the vast country estate of James De Lancey. The area developed rapidly following the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and by the 1830s had become a bustling neighborhood composed in large part of brick and brick-fronted Federal style row houses.

George Sutton had established himself in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as a captain sailing the coastal trade route between New York City and Charleston, South Carolina. He eventually became ship master in the New-York and Charleston Packet Line, and later an agent and merchant working in a counting house on the East River waterfront. Many of the early tenants of Sutton's rental properties were also involved in the maritime industry, including Captains William Sinclair and John Wright, shipmasters Edmund Sutton and Isaac Johnson, and mariner Thomas Wardle.

In subsequent decades the Lower East Side experienced dramatic demographic changes that transformed the area into the densest urban neighborhood on the planet and made the Federal style residence a rare survivor amongst a sea of newer and much larger multi-family dwellings. Beginning in the 1840s, as Irish and German immigrants settled in the area, many of the existing row houses—including the 143 Allen Street House—were converted for use by a number of separate families. Later, with the influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia after 1880, most of the older residences were replaced outright with larger purpose-built tenements.

The design of the 143 Allen Street House is characteristic of the Federal style in its high peaked roof with dormers, Flemish bond brickwork, and brownstone window lintels and sills on the second story. Despite alterations to the basement and parlor floor for commercial use in the 1910s, the residence is among the relatively rare surviving and intact Manhattan town houses of the Federal style and period, and is one of only a handful still extant on the Lower East Side.

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## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Early History and Development of the Lower East Side<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the arrival of European fur traders and the Dutch West India Company, Manhattan and much of the present-day tri-state area was populated by bands of Lenape Indians. The Lenape traveled from one encampment to another with the seasons. Fishing camps were occupied in the summer and inland camps were used during the fall and winter to harvest crops and hunt. The main trail ran the length of Manhattan from the Battery to Inwood following the course of Broadway adjacent to present-day City Hall Park before veering east toward the area now known as Foley Square. It then ran north with major branches leading to habitations in Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side at a place called Rechtauck or Naghtogack in the vicinity of Corlears Hook. In 1626, Director-General Peter Minuit of the Dutch West India Company “purchased” the island of Manhattan from the Lenape for sixty guilders worth of trade goods.<sup>2</sup>

During the period of Dutch rule, the area now known as the Lower East Side was divided into a number of large farms. Three of the parcels located on the east side of the Bowery between present-day Broome and Houston Streets were granted by Director-General Willem Kieft in 1647 to a group of free Africans; the southern-most of these—which includes the land on which the 143 Allen Street House now stands—went to Bastien Negro, while the other two went to Anthony Congo and Francisco D’Angola.<sup>3</sup> After changing hands several times during the second half of the seventeenth century, the two plots formerly owned by Bastein and Congo were acquired in 1718 by May Bickley, a lawyer who had served as attorney general for the province of New York and as City Recorder.<sup>4</sup> The Bickley family soon erected a dwelling house on the property, situated along the east side of the Bowery near present-day Delancey Street.<sup>5</sup> Within a few years, however, May Bickley had died and in 1725 his brother, Brune Bickley of Sussex County, England, took title to the estate through his New York-based attorney Francis Harrison.<sup>6</sup> It is unlikely the latter Bickley ever lived in his colonial manor, and by 1730 there are records of the property being lent or leased to other prominent members of New York society.<sup>7</sup>

It appears that by the mid 1730s James De Lancey had taken permanent occupancy of the Bickley estate.<sup>8</sup> He purchased the property outright in 1744 and eventually accumulated a vast tract of land that covered over 300 acres of the Lower East Side. At the time of his occupancy of the Bickley manor, De Lancey was a rising member of New York’s Knickerbocker society. The son of Stephen De Lancey, a French Huguenot émigré and prosperous New York merchant, he had received his advanced education in England under the Archbishop of Canterbury and had returned to New York in 1725 as a fully admitted member of the bar. In 1729 he married Anne Heathcote, the daughter of Mayor Caleb Heathcote, and the following year helped lead the committee that drafted a new corporate charter for the City of New York, commonly known as the Montgomerie Charter. In 1731 De Lancey was appointed second justice of the New York Supreme Court and in 1733 was promoted to Chief Justice. He later served as Lieutenant Governor of New York, and for a few years as acting Governor. De Lancey was a recorded slave owner; Othello, a slave owned by De Lancey, was hung as a conspirator following the slave uprising of 1741.

James De Lancey died intestate in 1760 and his eldest son, also named James, inherited the extensive east side property.<sup>9</sup> The younger De Lancey soon had a portion of the estate surveyed into a regular grid of streets centered on a large open square, named the Great Square or De Lancey’s Square, modeled after London’s great Georgian residential enclaves.<sup>10</sup> By 1761

De Lancey had rented out most of the newly-mapped lots under long-term ground leases. Some—particularly those along the Bowery—were developed with modest wood houses by artisan tenants. Many, however, remained vacant as their leaseholders held on to the properties as speculative investments in anticipation of the future growth of the city into the Lower East Side.<sup>11</sup>

The American War of Independence disrupted the plans of these entrepreneurial leaseholders and brought a temporary halt to development on the Lower East Side. The situation was further complicated when, in 1779, James De Lancey was pronounced a traitor and his lands declared forfeit under New York State's Act of Attainder. It took several years following the end of hostilities for the Commissioners of Forfeiture to dispose of the property. From 1782-84, Evert Bancker was engaged in resurveying the area into salable lots. To maximize profits, he did away with De Lancey's Square and laid out two additional streets parallel to the Bowery, the western-most of which is present-day Allen Street.<sup>12</sup> After Bancker's survey was completed in 1784, Isaac Stoutenburgh and Philip Van Cortlandt, Commissioners of Forfeiture for the Southern District of New York, began the process of selling off the property at public auction.

Even with nearly 2,000 building lots suddenly made available for purchase on the open market, development of the Lower East Side remained relatively lethargic through the final decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> By the early 1800s, however, the city had grown northward to such an extent that construction in the area had become imperative. In 1803 the city's Common Council ordered that "all the Streets on the ground commonly known by the name of Delancey's ground be opened as soon as possible."<sup>14</sup> Within a decade many of the roads on the Lower East Side had been regulated and some were even paved.<sup>15</sup> Public institutions, often amongst the first occupants to colonize a new neighborhood, soon arrived. The Allen Street Methodist Episcopal Church (demolished), which opened across the street from the site of the 143 Allen Street House in 1810, was amongst the earliest.<sup>16</sup> The area continued to develop rapidly during the 1810s and 1820s, and by the 1830s virtually the entire Lower East Side had been transformed into a bustling urban neighborhood composed in large part of brick and brick-fronted Federal style row houses.<sup>17</sup>

### George Sutton and the Construction of the 143 Allen Street House<sup>18</sup>

The 143 Allen Street House was erected at the height of this period of fervent development on the Lower East Side and its history is representative of the evolution of the neighborhood from rural outskirts to an integral part of the city's urban fabric. In 1787 merchant Aaron Stockholm purchased four lots of James De Lancey's former estate at the corner of Allen and Rivington Streets from the Commissioners of Forfeiture.<sup>19</sup> Like many who acquired portions of the confiscated land, Stockholm held the property as an investment throughout the 1790s. By the early 1800s he had apparently run into financial difficulties and the lots were sold to George G. Messerve in order to pay off creditors.<sup>20</sup> The "Bowery Butcher," as Messerve was sometime known, was alternately a legitimate businessman and a notorious brawler. He maintained a prosperous butcher's stall at the Fulton Market and came to control a significant amount of real estate on the Lower East Side.<sup>21</sup> He was also frequently charged with assault and riot, at least once being fined a substantial sum for his disorderly conduct.<sup>22</sup>

The Messerve family held onto their lots for nearly a quarter century until 1829, when they decided to develop the property. In September of that year they hired Edward Doughty, city surveyor, to remap the parcel and lay out a new set of six lots—five fronting on Allen Street and another facing Rivington Street at the rear of the others. A few months later, Nicholas W.

Messerve leased all six lots to George Sutton, who had married into the family in 1818 when he wed Ann Eliza Messerve.<sup>23</sup> The lease ran for a term of 21 years with a yearly rent of \$400. It did not require—as many from that period did—that houses be erected on the property, but it did encourage such construction by stipulating that the leasor would repay at the end of the 21 years “the value of such brick or brick front two story houses as shall then be standing and remaining on the said lots (provided the said house shall be well built and each house shall stand and be on the line of the street and shall cover the whole front of a lot).”<sup>24</sup> Sutton soon commenced construction on a group of houses on the six leased lots. By 1830 two buildings had been completed and work was under way on a third.<sup>25</sup> A year later the five lots at 137-145 Allen Street were each occupied by a two-story brick house and construction was progressing on a sixth at 63 Rivington Street.

In the 1810s George Sutton had established himself as captain of the ship *Corsair*, sailing the coastal trade route between New York City and Charleston, South Carolina. He soon developed a close business relationship with Anson G. Phelps, senior partner in the firm of Phelps & Peck—later Phelps, Dodge & Co.—which became one of the largest importers of metal and metal goods from Europe. By the early 1820s Sutton had become co-owner and captain of Phelps’s *Empress*, and in 1822 the pair entered the ship into the New-York and Charleston Packet Line, the first regularly-scheduled service to run between those two ports.<sup>26</sup> Sutton eventually became agent for the line in 1826, moving to a desk job in Phelps & Peck’s countinghouse at 181 Front Street.<sup>27</sup> He continued to oversee the Charleston packets, as well as serving as general merchant, until his death in 1848.

While it is unclear if Sutton himself ever owned slaves, his entire career centered on shipping and selling the primary product of the nation’s slave labor. The New York-Charleston trade route was part of what has been called the “Cotton Triangle.”<sup>28</sup> Sutton’s main cargo on the trip north from Charleston would have been bales of cotton cultivated on southern plantations by an increasingly large workforce of African slaves. Once the cotton arrived in New York, Sutton’s associate Phelps would then transship it across the Atlantic to his partner in Liverpool. On the return trip to New York, Phelps’s firm would load its ships with metal and metal goods to either sell in the city or to send with Sutton back down to Charleston.

The six houses at Allen and Rivington Streets were maintained as investment properties, although Sutton seems to have preferred renting the buildings to friends and business associates—many of whom also participated in the Cotton Triangle trade. Thomas Wardle—who later succeeded Sutton as the agent of the Charleston Packet Line in 1848—resided at 137 Allen Street from 1830-32 and at 63 Rivington Street beginning in 1832.<sup>29</sup> Captain William Sinclair, master of the ship *Anson* in the Charleston line, occupied 139 Allen Street for a couple of years in the early 1830s, while Captain John T. Wright lived in No. 137 from 1830-34. Shipmaster Edmund Sutton, perhaps a relation of George, resided at 141 Allen Street around 1832-33. The first tenant of 143 Allen Street appears to have been Gertrude Ingersoll, widow of Doctor John J. Ingersoll, who occupied a part of the building from 1831-34. She shared the house with Ebenezer Whiting, a bureaucrat with the City of New York, from 1831-33, and with Isaac Johnson, a shipmaster who may have been in Sutton’s employ, in 1833-34. By 1834 George M. Clearman had taken primary occupancy of the house. Directories initially list Clearman as a grocer, but by 1836 he had assumed the title of merchant.<sup>30</sup>

Sutton, perhaps realizing that the fortunes of the Lower East Side had reached their peak, began selling off the six residences to individual owners in the spring of 1837. The 143 Allen Street House was acquired at this time by Joseph Durbrow, Jr., an aspiring clerk who later

became a prominent figure in the nascent San Francisco banking industry. The Durbrows resided in the building for only a few years before selling it in 1844 to mason and builder Thomas Haley. This progression of ownership and occupancy at the 143 Allen Street House—from established ship captains and merchants, to young but ambitious clerks, to minor artisans and manual laborers—is reflective of the major demographic changes that swept over the Lower East Side in the following decades.

### Federal-Style Houses in Manhattan<sup>31</sup>

As the city of New York grew in the period after the Revolution, large plots of land in Manhattan were sold and subdivided for the construction of groups of brick-clad houses. Their architectural style has been called “Federal” after the new republic, but in form and detail they continued the Georgian style of Great Britain. Federal-style houses were constructed from the Battery as far north as 23<sup>rd</sup> Street between the 1780s and 1830s. The size of the lot dictated the size of the house: typically each house lot was 20 or 25 feet wide by 90 to 100 feet deep, which accorded with the rectilinear plan of New York City, laid out in 1807 and adopted as the Commissioners’ Plan in 1811. The house itself would be as wide as the lot, and 35 to 40 feet deep. This allowed for a stoop and small front yard or areaway, and a fairly spacious rear yard, which usually contained a buried cistern to collect fresh water and the privy. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, several houses were often constructed together, sharing common party walls, chimneys, and roof timbering to form a continuous group. The houses were of load-bearing masonry construction or modified timber-frame construction with brick-clad front facades. With shared structural framing and party walls, each house in a row was dependent on its neighbor for structural stability. The design of some houses has been identified with certain architects or builders, such as John McComb, Jr., though such documentation is rare. With the increasing availability of pattern books, such as Asher Benjamin’s *American Builders Companion*—published in six editions between 1806 and 1827—local builders had access to drawings and instructions for exterior and interior plans and details.

Federal-style rowhouses usually had a three-bay facade with two full stories over a high basement and an additional half story under a peaked roof with the ridge line running parallel to the front facade. Very modest houses could be two bays wide, while grander town houses had three full stories and could be up to five bays wide. The front, and sometimes rear, facade was usually clad in red brick laid in the Flemish bond pattern, which alternated a stretcher and a header in every row. This system allowed the linking of the more expensive face brick with the cheaper, rougher brick behind. Walls were usually two “wythes,” or eight inches, thick. Because brick was fabricated by hand in molds rather than by machine, it was relatively porous. To protect the brick surface and slow water penetration, facades were often painted.

The planar quality of Federal-style facades was relieved by ornament in the form of lintels, entrances, stoops with iron railings, cornices, and dormers. Some grander houses, like the Dickey House at 67 Greenwich Street, featured a bow on the front and/or rear facade, which allowed for fashionable interior rooms with curved shapes. Doorway and window lintels, seen in a variety of types—flat, splayed, incised, or molded—were commonly stone. The most ornamental feature was the doorway, often framed with columns and sidelights and topped with a rectangular transom or fanlight, and having a single wooden paneled door. The entrance was approached by a stoop—a flight of stone steps usually placed to one side of the facade—on the parlor floor above a basement level. Wrought-iron railings with finials lined the stoop and enclosed areaways. Window openings at the parlor and second stories were usually the same

height—the size sometimes diminished on the third story—and were aligned and of the same width from story to story. The wood-framed sash were double-hung and multi-light, typically six-over-six. Shutters were common on the exterior. A wooden cornice with a molded fascia extended across the front along the eave, which carried a built-in gutter. A leader head and downspout that drained onto the sidewalk extended down the facade on the opposite side from the doorway. Pedimented or segmental dormers on the front roof slope usually had decorative wood trim, and the top sash were often arched with decorative muntins. The roof was covered with continuous wood sheathing over the rafters and clad in slate.

The design of the 143 Allen Street House is characteristic of the Federal style in its high peaked roof with dormers, Flemish bond brickwork, and brownstone window lintels and sills on the second story. Despite alterations to the basement and parlor floor, and the loss of the original stoop, the residence is among the relatively rare surviving and significantly intact Manhattan town houses of the Federal style and period (dating from 1789 to 1834).<sup>32</sup> It is one of only a handful still extant on the Lower East Side, which also includes the William and Rosamond Clark House (1824-25), 51 Market Street; the houses of the Henry Street Settlement (1827), 263 and 265 Henry Street; 511 and 513 Grand Street Houses (1827-28); and 281 East Broadway House (1829), all designated New York City Landmarks. These row houses—along with a few religious buildings also erected on the Lower East Side during the Federal period—are virtually all that remain of the area’s first major wave of urban development.<sup>33</sup>

#### Later History of the 143 Allen Street House<sup>34</sup>

The Haley family retained ownership of the 143 Allen Street House for nearly eight decades from the 1840s into the 1920s.<sup>35</sup> During that period the Lower East Side experienced dramatic changes that transformed the area into the densest urban neighborhood on the planet and made the Federal-style building a rare survivor amongst a sea of newer and much larger multi-family dwellings known as tenements. The continuing northward growth of the city that had originally brought inhabitants to the Lower East Side in the first decades of the nineteenth century had, by the 1830s, pushed the city’s most fashionable residential district into the streets of what is now the East Village.<sup>36</sup> As wealthy merchants and middle-class families—such as those who originally occupied George Sutton’s houses—migrated out of the neighborhood, working-class tenants like the Haleys moved in.

The large waves of immigrants that began landing in New York during the 1840s further propelled the demographic transformation of the Lower East Side. Many of these newcomers were Irish-Americans; Irish immigration to New York—and the settlement of Irish immigrants on the Lower East Side—rapidly increased following the outbreak of Ireland’s Great Famine in 1845. Soon afterward, German immigrants fleeing unemployment, religious oppression, famine, and the European Revolutions of 1848 also moved into the area. The city’s German population grew from about 24,000 in the mid-1840s to over 400,000 by 1880. By then almost the entire Lower East Side was known as *Kleindeutschland*, or “Little Germany.” The German population of the Lower East Side was in turn displaced beginning in the 1880s by a second wave of immigrants—this time largely composed of Eastern European and Russian Jews. In the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century hundreds of thousands of the new arrivals settled in the neighborhood, pushing the area’s population density ever higher.

The rapid increase in population on the Lower East Side led to a dramatic revision of the neighborhood’s housing stock. Beginning in the late 1830s, sometimes only a few years after their initial construction, large numbers of existing row houses were converted for multi-family

use. A 2½-story Federal-style residence such as the 143 Allen Street House—originally intended for one or two families—could be subdivided into at least eight separate apartments with two households occupying every floor including the cellar and attic.<sup>37</sup> Developers also adopted the purpose-built tenement as a legitimate building type during this period.<sup>38</sup> Initially similar in size and style to the earlier row houses, the city’s earliest tenements were often only three- or four-stories tall and extended as little as 40 feet deep into their lot.<sup>39</sup> By the 1860s, however, much larger multi-family dwellings were being constructed that were at least five stories in height and occupied nearly the entire depth of their lots. As the population of the Lower East Side continued to grow during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, increasing numbers of older row houses were demolished to make way for the newer and much more profitable large tenement buildings.

It is not known exactly when the 143 Allen Street House was converted for multi-family use, but it may have happened as early as the late 1840s when the Haley family moved out of the building and the property was apparently turned over to rental tenants. Census records from 1880—the first enumeration to comprehensively list full building addresses—indicate that at least thirteen people comprising two separate households occupied the residence. The larger household consisted of David and Jesse Phillips, both of whom had been born in the German state of Prussia, and their six children; the other was composed of William Henry Berry, a native-born locomotive engineer, and his mother, sister, and two lodgers.<sup>40</sup> By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 19 people resided at 143 Allen Street in six distinct households, while the 1910 census lists 15 tenants including ten boarders—most of them salesmen—in the building.<sup>41</sup>

While the 143 Allen Street House survived the transformation of Lower East Side into a tenement house district, four of Sutton’s original six row houses were demolished around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three to make way for larger multi-family dwellings.<sup>42</sup> Nos. 141 and 143 Allen Street, both still in the possession of the Haley family, remained standing but were soon altered for commercial use. Plans to remove the front stoops and lower the main entrances of both houses to street level were filed with the city’s Department of Buildings in 1912, and another proposal to enlarge and combine the parlor floor window openings to create large display windows was submitted the following year. Max Muller, a long-practicing but little-known architect, designed both alterations.<sup>43</sup>

The Haley family finally sold the buildings at 141 and 143 Allen Street in 1920 to Louis Wahrsager, a manufacturer and retailer of mattresses.<sup>44</sup> Wahrsager established his business and home at No. 141, while the 143 Allen Street House appears to have continued to serve as an investment property, being rented out to a series of business and residential tenants. Census records from 1920 list the family of Max Seelenfreund, a Yiddish-speaking quilt maker from Hungary, as the only occupants of the building; it is likely they also maintained a retail operation out of the first floor commercial space.<sup>45</sup> Photographs from c. 1939 show that Wahrsager was still at 141 Allen Street while No. 143 has signage for “S. Kotlow, Men’s Neckwear.”<sup>46</sup>

The influx of Eastern Europeans to the Lower East Side slowed dramatically in 1924 following the passage of the so-called “Quota Law,” which placed strict limits on the number of immigrants allowed to enter the country. Additionally, the expansion of the subway system, the construction of affordable and more spacious housing in the other boroughs and other areas of Manhattan, and the movement of the city’s garment industry to the streets of the West 30s, led to the precipitous decline of the Jewish population of the Lower East Side—and the neighborhood’s population in general—in the 1920s. It was around this time that the city embarked on a number of infrastructure improvements that significantly altered the character of the area surrounding the 143 Allen Street House. In 1932 Allen Street was widened into a broad avenue; all of the

buildings on the eastern side of the street were demolished, in many places leaving blank or unadorned side walls to face the newly created boulevard. A decade later, in 1942, the tracks of the Second Avenue elevated train—which had been built in 1879 almost to the rooflines of the Sutton row houses, blocking light and air to the apartments below—was removed from the thoroughfare.

In the following years, thousands of Puerto Ricans, newly arrived in New York, settled on the Lower East Side. They were joined, starting in the 1960s, by natives of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Chinatown, the formerly Cantonese enclave centered on Mott Street near Chatham Square, has boomed in the past four decades; with the arrival of immigrants from other regions of China and other East Asian countries, it has spread to encompass much of the neighborhood. At the same time, the Lower East Side has shrunk in geographical size, as gentrified areas north of Houston Street have been renamed NoHo and the East Village. The Wahrsager family retained possession of 141 and 143 Allen Street throughout these demographic changes until finally conveying both properties in 1980 to a group of artists including Amerigo Marras. The building at No. 141 was subsequently sold off and later demolished for a new residential apartment building, leaving the 143 Allen Street House as the sole survivor of Sutton's original group of six Federal-style residences.

### Description

The 143 Allen Street House is a 20-foot-wide, 2½-story Federal-style row house clad in Flemish bond brickwork. The raised basement—which has been reconfigured with a single large opening containing an entrance at left and a window at center—originally contained two smaller window openings and was clad in brownstone laid in coursed ashlar, some of which remains at left and at center. The original configuration of the parlor floor included a stoop leading to a raised entrance in the right bay and two rectangular windows in the center and left bays similar to those on the second story. The stoop was removed in a 1912 alteration and the entrance opening cut nearly down to grade above two bluestone steps. It features a new paneled wood door and wood frame with a large multi-paned transom above; the stone lintel appears to be original, as is the brickwork to the left of the opening. The thin brick pier to the right of the entrance appears to have been altered, possibly when the adjoining row house at 145 Allen Street was demolished. During a 1913 alteration, the two original parlor floor windows were combined and extended slightly upward to create a large show window, with a steel beam lintel installed above. The brickwork above and below the parlor floor show window has subsequently been rebuilt. A single light fixture and a ceramic street number tile have been installed on the original brickwork to the left of the entrance. The second story remains largely unaltered, with its original window configuration and nearly all of its historic brickwork. Each of the three window openings has a projecting brownstone sill and a brownstone lintel that has been shaved down. A wide metal fascia with a horizontal lap joint sets off the facade from the roof; a gutter extends across the facade above the fascia with a downspout to the left. This metal fascia is not original to the house but is of similar size and location to the wooden cornices typical of the Federal style. The roof is pitched with the ridge line running parallel to the front and rear facades. It retains its original pitch and has been reclad with standing-seam metal. Two large dormers project from the front of the roof nearly to the line of the facade. The dormers retain their original size but have been rebuilt, the originals having been segmental-arched with segmental-arched window openings rather than pedimented with rectangular window openings. A skylight has also been punched through the roof between the two dormers. All of the windows in the



building have been replaced; the parlor floor opening is now fitted with a pair of six-over-six wooden sash flanking a large multi-paned casement window, while the upper floor openings feature six-over-six wooden sash. The concrete areaway in front of the building features a non-historic wrought iron fence and gate. A set of stairs leads down to an excavated area at left that provides access to the basement entrance. A permanent brick planter box and a metal standpipe are at the far left of the areaway. The yard at the rear of the house may have potential as an archaeological resource for remains of a cistern or privy.<sup>47</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this section were adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *511 Grand Street House Designation Report* (LP-2269) (New York: City of New York, 2007), prepared by Marianne S. Percival. Information in this section is based on the following sources: Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Reginald Pelham Bolton, *New York City in Indian Possession*, 2d ed. (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1920; reprint, 1975); Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Andrew S. Dolkart, *Biography of a Tenement House in New York City: An Architectural History of 97 Orchard Street* (Santa Fe, NM and Staunton, VA: The Center for American Places, 2006); Robert Steven Grumet, *Native American Place Names in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1981); *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York 1784-1831* (MCC) 3 (New York: City of New York, 1917); Christopher Moore, "A World of Possibilities: Slavery and Freedom in Dutch New Amsterdam," in *Slavery in New York*, ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris (New York: New Press, 2005); I.N. Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* 1-6 (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915-1924).

<sup>2</sup> The Native American "system of land tenure was that of occupancy for the needs of a group" and those sales that the Europeans deemed outright transfers of property were to the Native Americans closer to leases or joint tenancy contracts where they still had rights to the property. Bolton, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 1644, the Dutch West India Company frequently issued land grants to free Africans in order to establish a protective buffer between the European colonists living at the tip of Manhattan and the Native Americans to the north. Later, after the English had seized control of the area, free blacks were relegated to alien status and were denied the privileges granted to white residents. By the early 1680s, most of the African landowners lost their property and departed the island for Brooklyn, New Utrecht and New Jersey (although it appears the grant to Bastien Negro had expired by the 1650s, well before the English conquest of New Amsterdam). Burrows and Wallace, 32-33; Moore 43; Stokes 6, 87.

<sup>4</sup> Bickley apparently came to New York as a personal associate of Edward Hyde, the Viscount of Cornbury and Queen Anne's cousin, who had been appointed royal governor of the colony in 1702. It is unclear if he ever owned slaves personally, although he is known to have persecuted slaves unfairly accused of murder—in particular a slave named Mars who he tried three times unsuccessfully in 1712—during his time as attorney general. Burrows and Wallace 114-15; Stokes 6, 87.

<sup>5</sup> The Bickley house was located on the block now bound by the Bowery, Delancey, Chrystie, and Rivington Streets. Stokes 4, 584.

<sup>6</sup> Stokes 6, 87.

<sup>7</sup> In 1730, a Col. Gilbert was in occupancy "at the Bowery, in the pretty House which Mr. Bickley built." *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Sept. 3-10, 1730), quoted in Stokes 4, 516.

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<sup>8</sup> Stokes 1, 266.

<sup>9</sup> Research was inconclusive on the status of the younger James De Lancey as a slave owner. He was born into a slave-owning family and may have inherited slaves after his father's death.

<sup>10</sup> Blackmar, 34. The square was bounded by present-day Eldridge, Broome, Essex, and Hester Streets.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Stokes 6, 94. Allen Street was originally known as Fourth Street, continuing the numbering scheme established by James De Lancey in the 1760s. Many of the streets in the Lower East Side were renamed in 1817 to honor those who served during the War of 1812; Allen Street took its name from Navy Commander William H. Allen, who died in 1813 when his brig *Argus* lost an engagement to the HMS *Pelican* in the English Channel.

<sup>13</sup> Both the Taylor-Roberts Plan of 1797 and the Goerck-Mangin Plan of 1803 indicate that development of the Lower East Side was confined at this time primarily to the western edge of the former Rutgers farm and a narrow ribbon hugging the Bowery on its way north out of town. Both maps appear in Stokes 1, plates 64 and 70.

<sup>14</sup> MCC 3, 199.

<sup>15</sup> Stokes 3, 992-1012. Fourth Street—later Allen Street—was regulated in 1809.

<sup>16</sup> It is likely the church originally went by a different name, given that the road it faced was not renamed Allen Street until 1817.

<sup>17</sup> As noted by Dolkart, “the city made no effort to restrict what could be built” on the former De Lancey property, which was therefore developed “with a mix of wooden buildings and more substantial brick rowhouses.” The development of the Rutgers estate just to the south, on the other hand, was guided by restrictive covenants and contained almost exclusively two-story brick rowhouses. Dolkart, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Information in this section is based on the following sources: Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *The Rise of New York Port, 1815-1860* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939); Albion, *Square-Riggers on Schedule: the New York Sailing Packets to England, France, and the Cotton Ports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1938); Ancestry.com, *1790 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2009); Ancestry.com, *1800 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2009); Ancestry.com, *1810 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2009); Ancestry.com, *1820 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2009); John Doggett, Jr., *The New York City Directory and Co-Partnership Directory* (New York, several editions 1843-1850); Paul A. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Williamsburgh, VA: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1987); David Longworth, *Longworth's American Almanack, New York Register and City Directory* (New York, several editions 1828-43); New York City, *Record of Assessments, Manhattan, Ward 10*; New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances.

<sup>19</sup> It appears Aaron Stockholm was a wealthy landowner who resided in Fishkill, in Dutchess County, New York. Census records from 1790, 1800, and 1810 all list several slaves in Stockholm's ownership. *1790 United States Census*, New York, Dutchess County, Fishkill, 6; *1800 United States Census*, New York, Dutchess County, Fishkill, 6; *1810 United States Census*, New York, Dutchess Country, Fishkill, 22.

<sup>20</sup> It does not appear that the Messerve family owned slaves, as census records from both 1800 and 1820 fail to record slaves in George Messerve's ownership. *1800 United States Census*, New York New York Ward7, 52; *1820 United States Census*, New York, New York Ward 8, 16.

<sup>21</sup> In 1810 Messerve owned \$1,000 worth of property on the Lower East Side; by the 1820s that number had risen to over \$10,000. Gilje, 243.

<sup>22</sup> According to some accounts, “hardly a year passed from 1808 to 1834 that either Butcher George or a member of the extensive Messerve clan did not appear in court on charges of assault and riot.” In 1829 he was fined \$300. Ibid, 243-244.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Eliza Messerve was Sutton's second wife; his first wife was Mary Lang, whom he wed in November 1816.

<sup>24</sup> Deed Liber 257, pg. 376.

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<sup>25</sup> Tax assessment records for 1830 list completed buildings at 137 and 139 Allen Street and an unfinished structure at no. 141; it appears that the street numbers for this year were not updated to reflect the new division of the Messerve property into six—rather than the earlier four—building lots and it is therefore unclear if the unfinished building listed at 141 Allen Street corresponds to the current no. 141 or 143.

<sup>26</sup> The New-York and Charleston Packet Line was initiated in the spring of 1822 by Oronodates Mauran in connection with the firm of Barker & Hopkins—which was soon replaced as joint operators by Phelps & Peck. Albion (1938), 130.

<sup>27</sup> The building that now stands at 181 Front Street, which is within the South Street Seaport Historic District, was erected in 1835-36 just after Phelps & Peck had moved out. Sutton later had offices at 88 South Street; that building was demolished in 1956. Its site was also later included within the South Street Seaport Historic District.

<sup>28</sup> For a full discussion of the Cotton Triangle, see Albion (1939), 95-121.

<sup>29</sup> Wardle eventually purchased the property outright from his colleague in 1837

<sup>30</sup> Clearman later entered into the maritime trades, serving during the 1840s and 1850s as partner in the firm of Sturges, Clearman & Co., which operated a line of ships sailing between New York and Liverpool.

<sup>31</sup> This section was adapted from: LPC, *94 Greenwich Street House Designation Report* (LP-2218) (New York: City of New York, 2009), prepared by Jay Shockley and LPC, *281 East Broadway House (Isaac T. Ludlam House) Designation Report* (LP-1993) (New York: City of New York, 1998), prepared by Marjorie Pearson. For the history of Federal-style rowhouses, see: Blackmar; Ada Louis Huxtable, *The Architecture of New York: Classic New York Georgian Gentility to Greek Elegance* (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books, 1964); Charles Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstone: the New York Rowhouse, 1783-1929, An Architectural and Social History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972); Montgomery Schuyler, "The Small City House in New York," *Architectural Record* (April-June, 1899), 357-388.

<sup>32</sup> The following Federal-style houses are designated New York City Landmarks: Edward Mooney House (1785-89), 18 Bowery; James Watson House (1793, attrib. to John McComb, Jr.; 1806), 7 State Street; nine houses at 25-41 Harrison Street (1796-1828; two designed by John McComb, Jr.); 94 Greenwich Street House (c. 1799-1800; fourth story added by 1858, rear addition c. 1853/1873); Nicholas and Elizabeth Stuyvesant Fish House (1803-04), 21 Stuyvesant Street; Gideon Tucker House (1808-09), 2 White Street; Robert and Anne Dickey House (1809-10), 67 Greenwich Street; Stephen van Rensselaer House (c. 1816), 149 Mulberry Street; James Brown House (c. 1817), 326 Spring Street; 480 Greenwich Street and 502-508 Canal Street Houses (1818-41); 83 and 85 Sullivan Street Houses (1819; third stories added 1880 and 1874); 486 and 488 Greenwich Street Houses (c. 1823); William and Rosamond Clark House (1824-25; two stories added in the nineteenth century), 51 Market Street; 265 Henry Street House (1827; third story added 1895); 145 and 147 Eighth Avenue Houses (c. 1827 and c. 1828); 511 and 513 Grand Street Houses (c. 1827-28); 127, 129, and 131 MacDougal Street Houses (c. 1828-29); Isaac Ludlam House (c. 1829), 281 East Broadway; Hamilton-Holly and Daniel Leroy Houses (1831), 4 and 20 St. Mark's Place; Seabury Treadwell House (1831-32), 29 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street; 116 Sullivan Street House (1832; third story added 1872); 131 Charles Street House (1834); and 203 Prince Street House (1834; third story added 1888).

<sup>33</sup> These religious buildings include the Northern Reformed Church (1817-19), 61 Henry Street; Willet Street Methodist Episcopal Church (1826), 7-13 Bialystoker Place; All Saint's Free Church (1827-29), 290 Henry Street, all designated New York City Landmarks.

<sup>34</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from: LPC, *S. Jarmulowsky Bank Building Designation Report* (LP-2363) (New York: City of New York, 2009), prepared by Michael D. Caratzas. Information in this section is based on the following sources: Ancestry.com, *1880 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2005); Ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2004); Ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2006); Ancestry.com, *1920 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2009); Dolkart; Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records); Joyce Mendelsohn, *The Lower East Side Remembered and Revisited*, 2d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); New York City Department of Housing and Buildings, Historical Occupancy Records, Initial Inspection Cards (I-Cards); New York City Division

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of Taxation, Tax Photographs (c. 1939); James Ward, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1900-1940* (Union, NJ: J&D Associates, 1989).

<sup>35</sup> Upon his death in 1853, all of Thomas Haley's property was placed in trust with the income to be divided between his wife, son, and two daughters. That the estate was not directly willed to an individual may explain in part the long ownership by the Haley family and the rare survival of the 143 Allen Street House.

<sup>36</sup> Dolkart, 10.

<sup>37</sup> The Department of Housing and Buildings I-Card for 143 Allen Street, filed in 1903, lists eight total apartments in the building; floor plans drawn by the inspector show that each floor had been divided into two apartments each.

<sup>38</sup> According to Dolkart, "the exact date of construction of the first purpose-built tenement in Manhattan is unknown, but it is often traced as far back as the 1820s or 1830s. By the 1840s, the number of the number of tenements, including both older converted single-family homes and new purpose-built structures, had increased significantly." Dolkart, 14-15.

<sup>39</sup> Blackmar, 200-201; Dolkart, 22.

<sup>40</sup> *1880 United States Census*, New York, New York (Manhattan), Enumeration District 209, 1.

<sup>41</sup> *1900 United States Census*, New York, Manhattan, Enumeration District 187, 8-9; *1910 United States Census*, New York, Manhattan Ward 10, Enumeration District 207, 8.

<sup>42</sup> 145 Allen Street was replaced by a six-story tenement in 1895, while nos. 137 and 139 were torn down 1899 for even larger multi-family dwelling in 1899. The other Sutton house to be demolished at this time, 63 Rivington Street, was replaced in 1904 by a local branch of the New York Public Library.

<sup>43</sup> Muller practiced architecture at least from 1892-1930. Steadman, 57; Ward, 56.

<sup>44</sup> Wahrsager had actually occupied 141 Allen Street since 1912; it is possible that the commercial alterations to 141 and 143 Allen Street, which were completed at about the same time, were commissioned by him for his mattress business.

<sup>45</sup> *1920 United States Census*, New York, Manhattan Assembly District 2, Enumeration District 147, 1.

<sup>46</sup> New York City Division of Taxation, Tax Photographs.

<sup>47</sup> Celia J. Bergoffen, "Lower East Side Rezoning, Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment Report," prepared for AKRF (April 16, 2008), 73.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of the building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 143 Allen Street House 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 143 Allen Street House was constructed c. 1830-31 as a speculative investment by George Sutton, a ship captain and counting house merchant; that the house was originally part of a group of six similar residences located in the heart of what is now known as Manhattan's Lower East Side on land that was once part of the vast country estate of James De Lancey; that the area developed rapidly following the turn of the nineteenth century and by 1830s had become a bustling neighborhood composed in large part of brick and brick-fronted Federal-style row houses such as the 143 Allen Street House; that George Sutton established himself as a captain sailing between New York City and Charleston, and that he later became agent and merchant for the New-York and Charleston Packet Line; that many of the early tenants of Sutton's rental properties, including the 143 Allen Street House, were also involved in the maritime industry; that in the decades following the construction of the 143 Allen Street House, the Lower East Side experienced dramatic demographic changes that transformed the area into the densest urban neighborhood on the planet and made the Federal-style residence a rare survivor amongst a sea of newer and much larger multi-family dwellings; that the arrival of Irish and German immigrants lead to the conversion of many of the existing row houses, including the 143 Allen Street House, for use by a number of separate families; that later—especially with the influx of Eastern European and Russian Jews to the Lower East Side—most of these older residences were replaced with larger purpose-built tenements; that the design of the 143 Allen Street House is characteristic of the Federal style in its high peaked roof with dormers, its Flemish bond brickwork, and its brownstone window lintels and sills on the second story; that despite alterations to the basement and parlor floor for commercial use in the 1910s, the residence is among the relatively rare surviving and intact Manhattan town houses of the Federal style and period, and that it is one of only a handful still extant on the Lower East Side.

Accordingly, pursuant to 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 the 143 Allen Street House at 143 Allen Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 415, Lot 23 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice Chair

Stephen F. Byrns, Diana Chapin, Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandes Gratz,

Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



**143 Allen Street House**  
143 Allen Street, Manhattan  
Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 415, Lot 23  
Built: c. 1830-31  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2009)*





**143 Allen Street House**  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2009)*

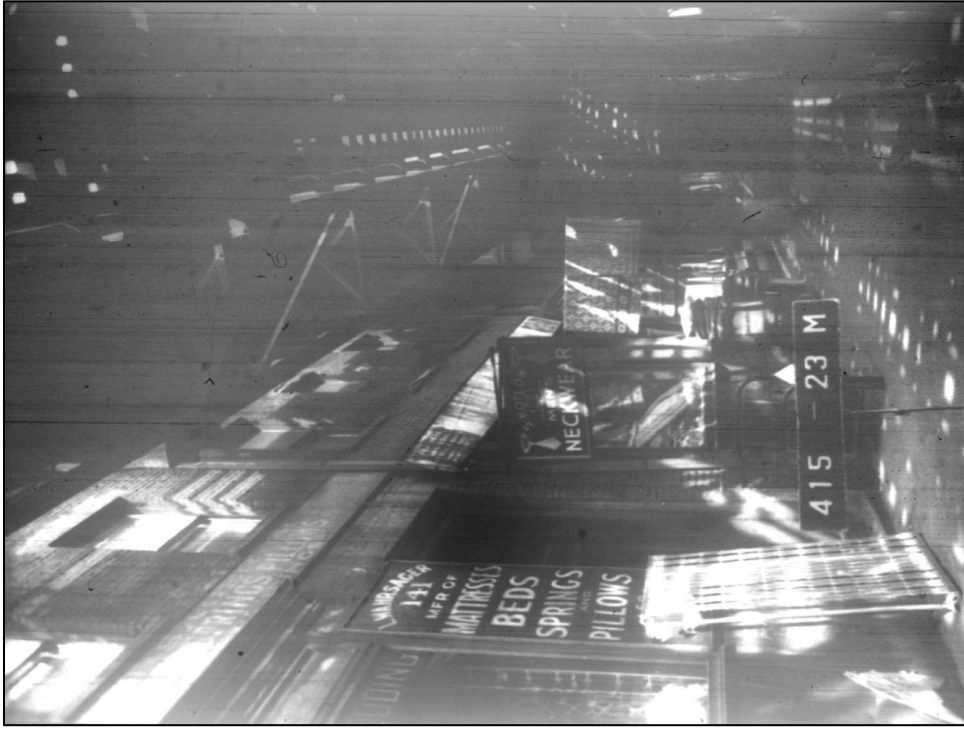


**143 Allen Street House**

View of 141 and 143 Allen Street

*Photo: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (c. 1985)*

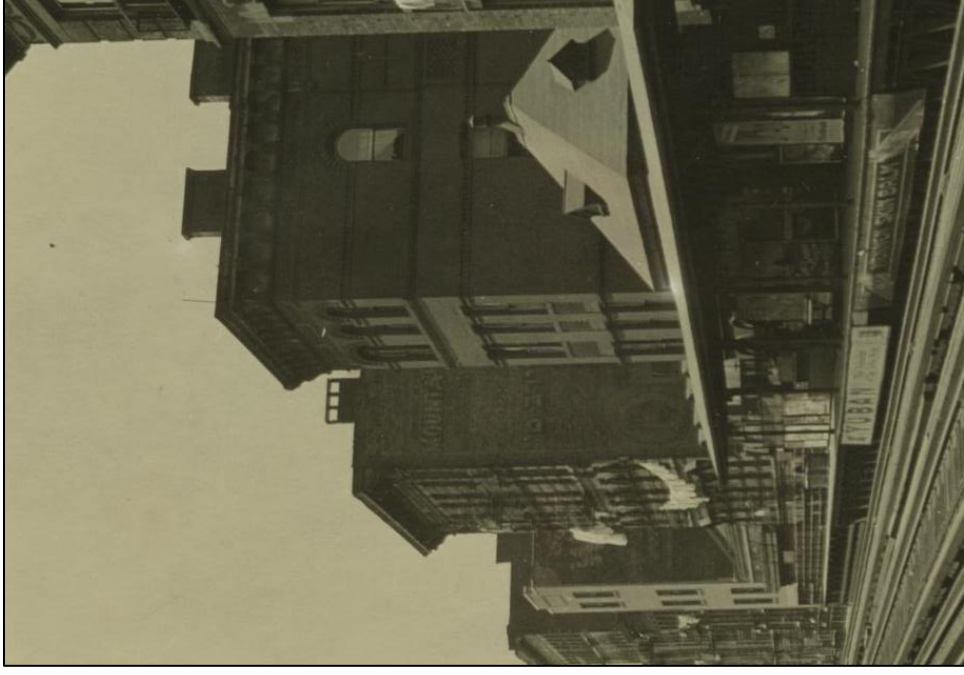




**143 Allen Street House**

View north along Allen Street showing storefronts at 141 and 143 Allen Street

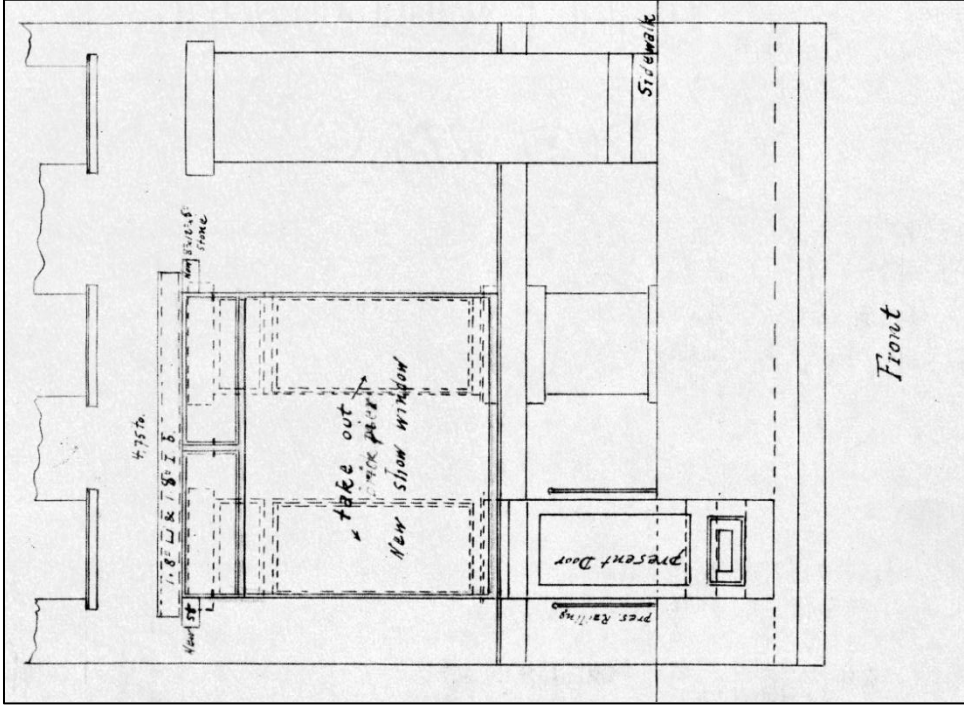
*Photo: New York City Department of Taxes (c. 1939)  
Courtesy New York City Municipal Archives*



**143 Allen Street House**

View south along elevated tracks with the dormers of 141 and 143 Allen Street just visible behind the station

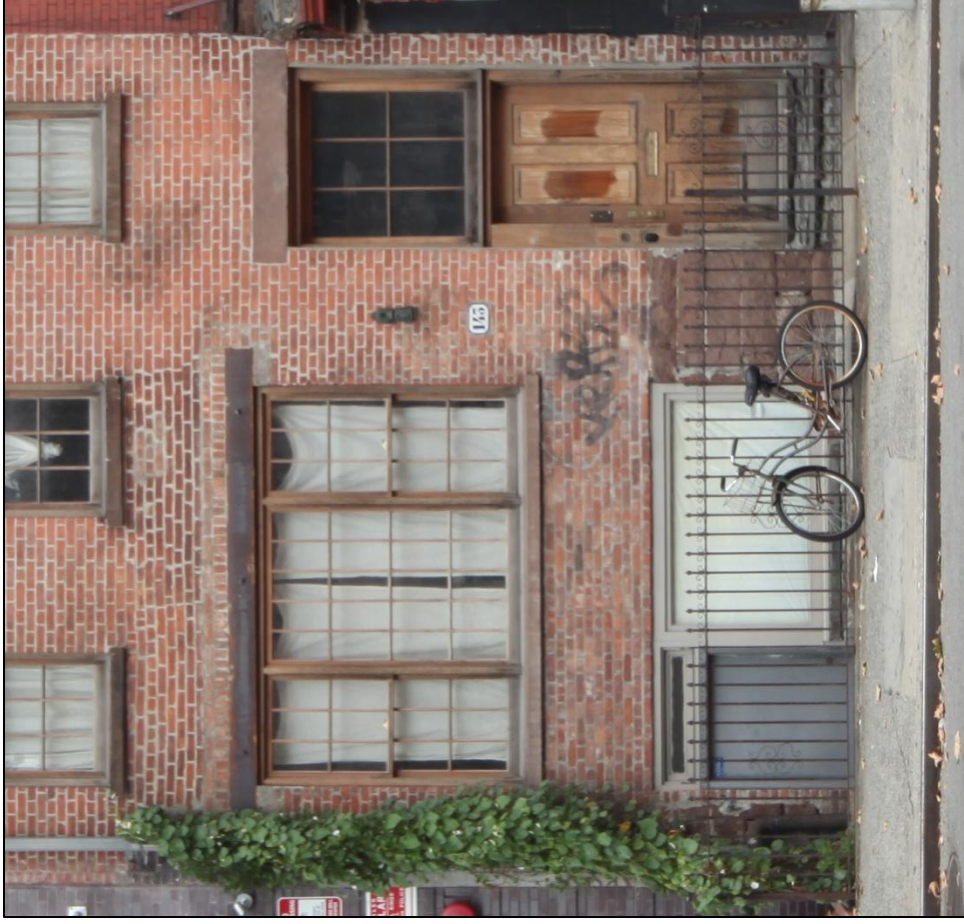
*Photo: Percy Loomis Speer (1927)  
Courtesy the Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations*



**143 Allen Street House**

Plan of 1913 alteration to parlor floor windows

Courtesy New York City Municipal Archives



**143 Allen Street House**

Current condition of parlor floor and basement

Photo: Christopher D. Brazeel (2009)

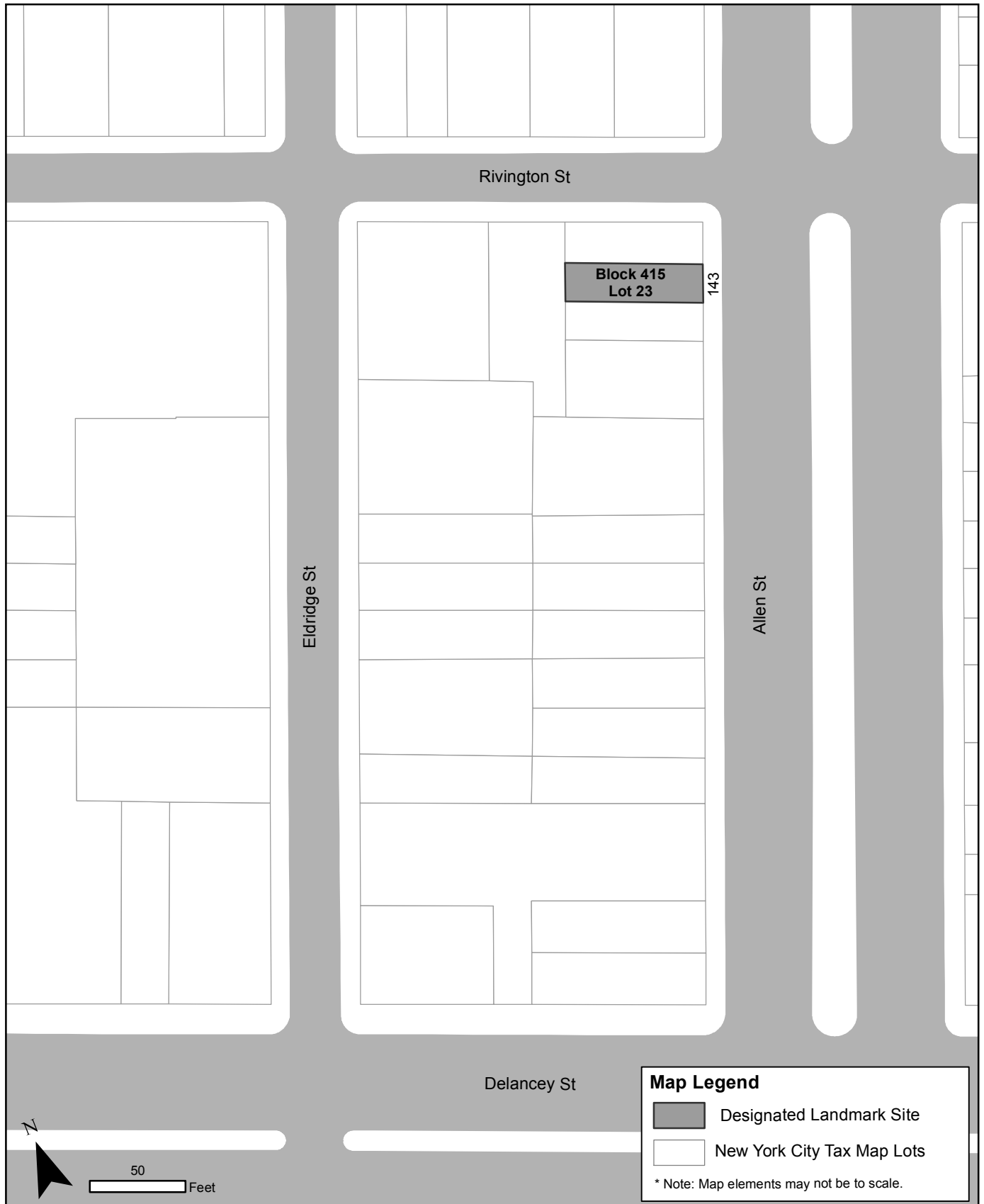




**143 Allen Street House**  
Detail of second story windows and Flemish bond brickwork  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2010)*



**143 Allen Street House**  
Detail of attic story with pitched roof and dormers  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2010)*



143 ALLEN STREET BUILDING (LP-2350), 143 Allen Street.  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 415, Lot 23.

Designated: February 9, 2010