

140 WEST 18TH STREET STABLE, 140 West 18th Street, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1865-66. Architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 793, Lot 61 in part,
consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On September 11, 1990, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 140 West 18th Street Stable and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 20). 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

Summary

The stable building at 140 West 18th Street is one of nine remaining brick-fronted stables from an original row of thirteen erected in 1864-66. Designed in a round-arched utilitarian style related to the German Rundbogenstil, it still features a mix of Romanesque and Renaissance Revival details. No. 140 West 18th Street has an asymmetrical arcaded composition which focuses on a pair of bifurcated Renaissance arches at the second story. Erected for merchant Henry Rice, the stable has had several notable owners, among them Catherine Lorillard Spencer, daughter of Peter A. Lorillard, one of the founders of the Lorillard Tobacco Company; her nephew Alfred R. Conkling, a prominent attorney and author; and merchant Malcolm Graham. As a component of one of the two uniformly designed mid-nineteenth-century private carriage house groups remaining in Manhattan, it 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 liverys. 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 small 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 backing 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 previously 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 140 West 18th Street was constructed for Henry G. Rice, senior partner in the drygoods firm of Rice, Chase & Company located at 47 Worth Street, who resided at 21 East 15th Street.¹² Following his death in 1868 the stable was purchased by Catherine Lorillard Spencer. Daughter of Peter A. Lorillard, one of the founders of the P. & G. Lorillard Tobacco Company, Catherine Lorillard inherited a considerable fortune from her father at his death in 1843.¹³ At the age of fifty she married Lieutenant William Spencer (U.S.N.), widower of her late sister Eleanora. The Spencers occupied a large mansion at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and East 16th Street during the 1860s and the 18th Street stable was probably purchased for their personal use. The property remained in Catherine Spencer's possession until her death in 1882, when her extensive land holdings were sold at auction. At the sale many of Catherine Spencer's properties were purchased by her heirs. Howard Conkling, son of her niece Eleonora Ronalds Conkling, bought the 18th Street stable which was then being leased at a rental of \$1,000 per year.¹⁴ He kept the stable for only a year before selling it to his brother Alfred R. Conkling.¹⁵ A lawyer and author, Conkling studied at Yale, Harvard, the University of Berlin, and Columbia College where he earned his law degree. As a young man he was attached with the U.S. Geological Survey and traveled extensively in the West. He specialized in real estate law and was president of the Realty League of New York City. He also served as a member of the New York City Board of Aldermen (1887-88) and New York State Assembly (1892-93, 1895-96) and was actively involved in the reform wing of the Republican Party. His books included Appleton's Guide to Mexico, Life and Letters of Roscoe

Conkling, and City Government in the United States. Conkling retained the 18th Street stable for about three years before selling it in April, 1887 to Malcolm Graham.

The son of John Lorimer Graham, a prominent attorney and Post Master of New York City, Malcolm Graham (1832-1899) began his career as a clerk in the firm of Smith, Young & Company.¹⁶ After a few years, he became affiliated with the firm of Schuyler, Hartley & Graham (later Hartley & Graham), dealers in guns and ammunition. Malcolm Graham and his partner Marcellus Hartley were also part-owners and officers of the Union Metallic Cartridge Company, the Remington Arms Company, and the Bridgeport Gun Implement Company. Graham served on the Board of Trustees of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church for many years and was a member of the Century, Metropolitan, Union, Union League, and New York Yacht Clubs. During the 1880s and 1890s he maintained homes in Seabright, New Jersey and at 13 West 17th Street in New York -- thus, it seems likely that the 18th Street stable remained a private stable during his lifetime.

The Design of the 140 West 18th Street Stable

The stable at 140 West 18th Street is characteristic of contemporary carriage house design as adapted to a narrow urban lot. Typically, the stable 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 facade is 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.¹⁷ 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,¹⁸ and Thomas Tefft's Union Depot, Providence, R.I. (1847, demolished). The style is reflected in the design of the stable at 140 West 18th Street by the choice of materials (unstuccoed brick and locally available sandstone), an emphasis on flat wall surfaces, and a clear definition of architectural elements. The meshing of classical and medieval motifs is apparent in the incorporation of such details as the Renaissance-inspired cornice and diamond-pointed keystones and the Romanesque-inspired arcades and rusticated bands. Especially noteworthy are the large second-story arches each 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 the round-arched style. 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 140 West 18th Street stable is distinguished by its skillful superimposition of recessed and projected planes. The double-height arches, carried on slender projected piers, are 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' imposts 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 this individual design, 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.

While the same decorative treatment is employed for all the buildings in the 18th Street row, this is the only surviving building in which the center and western bays are the same width and the bifurcated arch motif is repeated.¹⁹

Description

The two-story stable structure at 140 West 18th Street has a frontage of twenty-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. Its painted brick and stone facade is designed in the round-arched style and incorporates Romanesque and Renaissance details. The facade is organized in an asymmetrical arcaded composition comprising a narrow eastern bay and double-width center and western bays. At the ground story, the bays are articulated by projected piers. Originally, the wide center bay contained a pair of wood carriage doors, the eastern bay an arched entrance, and the western bay a 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 ground story has been extensively altered. The corner pier in the eastern bay retains some original ornament but the arched surround has been removed and the door opening reduced in height. There is a metal door topped by stuccoed brick. A metal roll-down gate spans the entire center bay. In the western bay the stone sill and watertable survive, but the original window surround was removed in 1933 and the window opening enlarged to contain a large multipane-steel-sash window. That window was subsequently removed and the opening has been sealed with brick and stucco. The cornice that originally separated the first and second stories has also been removed.

On the second story the piers carry an arcade in which the center and western arches are both wider and taller than the eastern arch. The arches are set-off by stone keystones. Stone bands mark the impost line of the arches and stone sills are set beneath the windows. (The stone bands have been cut flush with the brickwork and the keystone above the western arch has lost its original profile due to weathering.) The center and western bays are bisected by small brick pilasters. Each of these bays contains a pair of arched windows which is topped by a molded wood surround that features a central bull's-eye. The windows retain their original wood four-over-four top sash but the lower sash has been replaced. The building is crowned by a simple molded brick entablature.

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. Several of the original owners of the stables on 18th Street responded to the change in the character of the neighborhood by moving uptown or to the suburbs. At least two of the stables were sold to neighboring businesses. Other owners retained their stables as investments, property values on Sixth Avenue having skyrocketed with the opening of such department stores as B. Altman's at 19th Street (begun 1876) and Hugh O'Neill's near 20th Street (original store opened 1870, present building 1887),²⁰ and the completion of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway in 1878. The stable at 140 West 18th Street was retained by the Estate of Malcolm Graham until 1915 when the building was purchased by Margaret Kieley who owned the adjacent former stable building at 142 West 18th Street.²¹ In 1933 the two buildings were joined and altered for use as a garage and auto repair shop on the ground floor and manufacturing on the upper floors.²²

Today, the 140 West 18th Street stable building is a component of one of the two remaining mid-nineteenth century carriage house groups in Manhattan. While the ground story has been altered, the second story is generally well preserved and distinguishes the building as 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 140-142 West 18th Street Stable (LP-1608, Item No. 29); 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. A total of 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. Addresses and occupations taken from Trow's New York City Directory, 1864/65-1888/89. For property transactions see Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 922, p. 349; Liber 1067, p. 459; Liber 1705, p. 61; Liber 1781, p. 111; Liber 2049, p. 181; Liber 2049, p. 189.
13. On the Lorillards see, Beech, 19, 27; Philip Hone, The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851 (New York, 1927), vol. 2, p. 657; Walter Barrett, The Old Merchants of New York City, First Series (New York, 1862), 444-45; New York State's Prominent and Progressive Men (New York, 1902), vol. 3, pp. 190-92.
14. See the description of the Lorillard Spencer Sale in A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City (1898, rpt. New York, 1967), 141-43.
15. For the Conklings see Who's Who in New York (New York, 1904, 1909).
16. For Graham see Malcolm Graham, obituary, New York Times, Dec. 19, 1899, p. 9; and "Funeral of Malcolm Graham," New York Times, Dec. 23, 1899, p. 7. For Hartley see Moses King, King's Notable New Yorkers (New York, 1899), 477.
17. 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, RI, 1988), 35-41.

18. St. George's and the former Astor Library, now the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, are designated New York City Landmarks.
19. The variation in fenestration might be due to some variation in plan, perhaps in the arrangement of the second-floor living quarters. This design evidently caused the builder some problems -- note the difference in widths of the mullions in the bifurcated arches and the awkward treatment of the westernmost window surround.
20. Both the B. Altman and Hugh O'Neill Buildings are within the Ladies' Mile Historic District.
21. "Block Index to Conveyances," Block 793.
22. New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Alteration Permit, 973-1933. The portion of the building at No. 142 is not included in the Landmark Site.

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 140 West 18th Street Stable 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 140 West 18th Street Stable is one of nine remaining buildings from an original row of thirteen brick-fronted stables erected in 1864-66; that it is designed in a round-arched utilitarian style related to the German Rundbogenstil and still features a mix of Romanesque and Renaissance Revival details; that its facade has an asymmetrical arcaded composition which focuses on a pair of bifurcated Renaissance arches at the second story; that the building has had several notable owners, among them Catherine Lorillard Spencer, Alfred R. Conkling, and Malcolm Graham; that the 140 West 18th Street Stable 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 carriage houses and commercial liveries; that the construction of this building 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 140 West 18th Street Stable, 140 West 18th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 793, Lot 61 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, as its Landmark Site.

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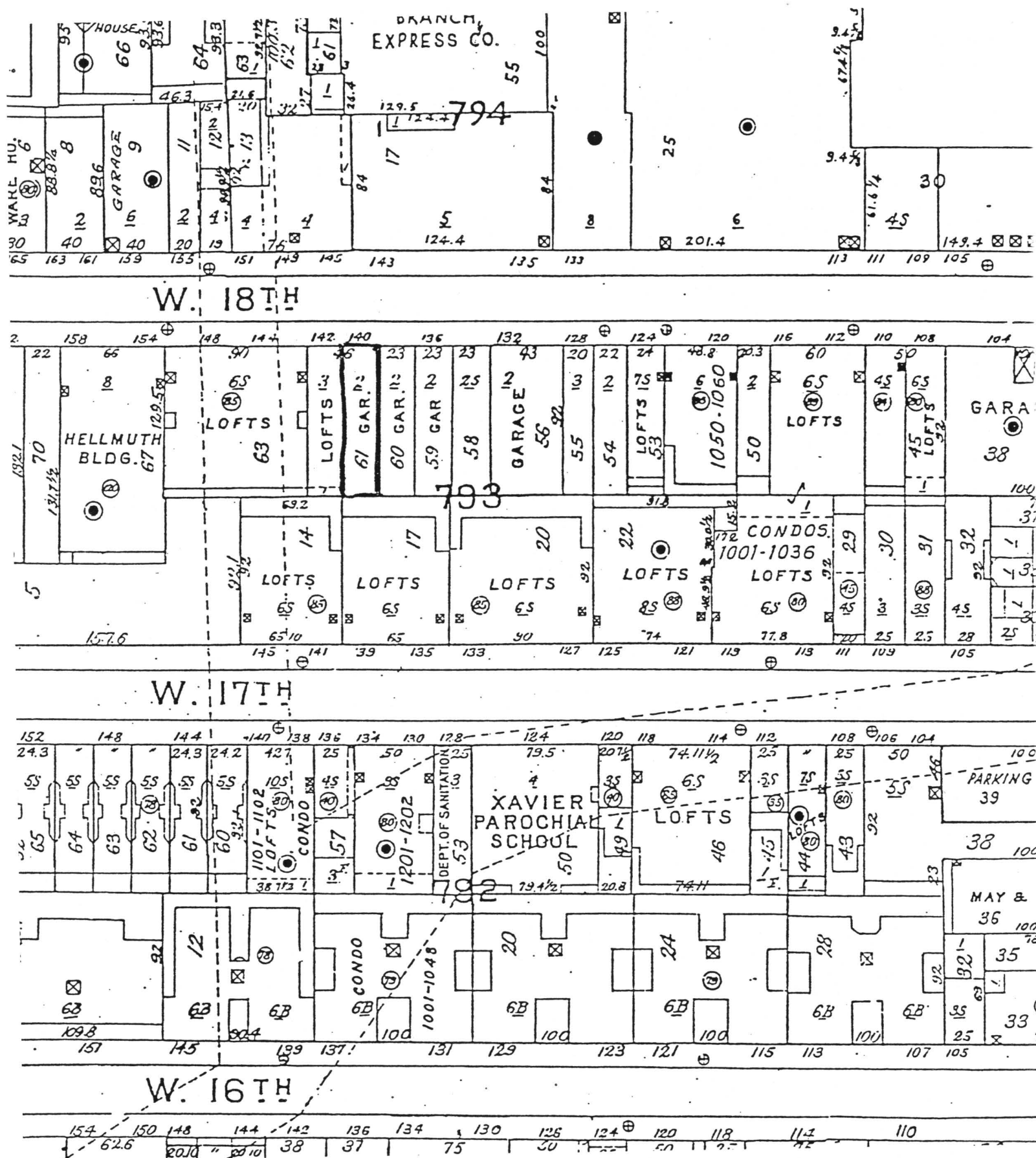
Trow's New York City Directory. New York: Trow's Publishing Co., 1864-1915.



140 West 18th Street Stable, 140 West 18th Street (1865-66)
Photo Credit: Gale Harris



140 West 18th Street Stable (detail)
Photo Credit: Gale Harris



140 West 18th Street Stable, 140 West 18th Street (Landmark Site)

Credit: Sanborn Manhattan Land Book, 1989-90