

BARBIZON HOTEL FOR WOMEN, 140 East 63rd Street (aka 136-146 East 63rd Street, 813-817 Lexington Avenue), Manhattan
Built 1927-28; architect, Murgatroyd & Ogden
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1397, Lots 1501-1588

On July 26, 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Barbizon Hotel for Women 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. A total of two witnesses, representing the Friends of the Upper East Side and the Historic Districts Council, spoke in favor of the designation. On July 20, 2011, the Full Board of Manhattan Community Board 8 adopted a resolution in support of the designation. In August 2011, Council Member Daniel R. Garodnick wrote to the Commission indicating his support for the designation. The Commission received three additional letters and two e-mails of support, including an e-mail message on behalf of Place Matters. There were no speakers or letters in opposition to the designation.

Summary

The Barbizon Hotel for Women was built in 1927-28 as a residential hotel and clubhouse for single women, who at that time were moving to New York City in record numbers to take advantage of new professional opportunities opening to them. The demand for inexpensive housing for single women led to the construction of several large residential hotels in Manhattan. Of these, the Barbizon, which was equipped with special studio, rehearsal and concert spaces to attract young women pursuing careers in the arts, became the most renowned. Its residents included many women who later became prominent actresses, writers, designers, and professional women, including author Sylvia Plath, who wrote about her residence at the Barbizon in *The Bell Jar*. The Barbizon also promoted women's organizations and arts organizations, providing meeting space to groups such as the National Junior League, Arts Council of New York, and women's college clubs.



Designed by the prominent hotel specialists Murgatroyd & Ogden, the 23-story Barbizon Hotel is an excellent representative of the 1920s apartment hotel building, and is notable for the high quality of its design. Its vigorous stepped-back massing reflects the influence of the 1916 zoning resolution and in particular the design of Arthur Loomis Harmon's Shelton Hotel. The Barbizon's design is distinguished by the complex arrangement of setbacks and recessed courts, which create subtle transitions between the various elements of the design, and by the masterful handling of its eclectic mixture of North Italian Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance ornament. The richness of the building's exterior brickwork that varies considerably in hue and texture, the careful proportioning of its details, and its dramatically massed roofline with its 18th story Gothic arcades and chapel-like crown have also won critical acclaim.

The Barbizon underwent alterations in the 1980s and 1990s and was recently converted into condominiums but still retains its significant architectural features and historic associations.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Lexington Avenue and the East 60s

Lexington Avenue, named for the famous Revolutionary War battle, was originally laid out in the 1830s as a 75-foot-wide road extending north from Gramercy Park.¹ It was regulated and paved over the course of several years and by the early 1850s had reached 66th Street, where it terminated at the foot of Hamilton Square. In the years following the Civil War, Hamilton Square was closed and Lexington Avenue was farther extended to Harlem.

During the post Civil War period real estate speculation was particularly intense on the Upper East Side, where Tammany Hall insiders had significant real estate investments. Under Boss William Marcy Tweed, then commissioner of the Department of Public Works, an army of workers laid out a coordinated network of water, sewer, and gas pipes, and miles of streets. A few developers began to erect speculative row houses in the East 60s near Lexington Avenue.² In 1874 the newly-formed Temple Beth-El, created by a merger of Congregation Anshe Chesed and Congregation Adas Jeshurun, moved from Anshe Chesed's temple on Norfolk Street to a new synagogue at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 63rd Street (the future site of the Barbizon Hotel), following its members who were leaving the increasingly crowded Lower East Side for new homes in midtown and the Upper East Side.³

By 1900, the Upper East Side of Manhattan, north of 59th Street and east of Central Park, had become the most fashionable residential address for wealthy New Yorkers. In the 1920s, a severe post-World War I housing shortage, rising land costs, and other economic factors that discouraged single-family home ownership coupled with advancements in the design and construction of multiple dwellings, which made apartment-living more desirable, led to the replacement of many older homes with high quality apartment buildings and hotels. Development was particularly intense along Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue, which became a desirable residential street once the New York Central's tracks were electrified and covered over in 1906. The opening of the 51st, 59th, 69th, and 77th Street stations of the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) Company's Lexington Avenue subway line (now the 4/5/6) in July 1918 and the Lexington Avenue/59th Street station of the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit (BMT) Company's Broadway line (now the N/R/W) in March 1920 also led to large-scale commercial and residential demand along or adjacent to Lexington Avenue. By 1923, the *New York Times* was already commenting that Lexington Avenue was "undergoing a transformation very similar to that which has made Park Avenue within recent years the most magnificent apartment house thoroughfare in the world."⁴

Judging from the recent operations and the plans already proposed for several additional apartment structures in the near future, Lexington Avenue is not only going to rival Madison Avenue as a choice apartment house thoroughfare, but may even outstrip that avenue in the number and general excellence of its modern multi-family houses.⁵

In March 1926 the trustees of Temple Rodeph Sholom, which had acquired the synagogue at 63rd Street and Lexington Avenue from Congregation Beth-El in 1892, decided to take advantage of increasing land values on Lexington Avenue and "to follow the trend of the members of their congregation in moving out of a district which is being rapidly changed for structures for other uses."⁶ The synagogue entered into a purchase agreement with the Amri Realty Company, which retained architect Emery Roth to design an apartment hotel for the site

since there were no other buildings of that type in the immediate neighborhood.⁷ By September 1926, the Amri Corporation was in negotiations to sell its interest in the synagogue and an adjacent building on Lexington Avenue to the Lex Ave & 63rd Street Corporation, which was headed by James S. Pollard and William H. Silk, a founder and officer of the Allerton Hotel chain. The Lex Ave & 63rd Street Corporation took title to the buildings in October and commissioned Murgatroyd & Ogden to prepare plans for the Barbizon, a 23-story club hotel, for the site. The architects filed their plans with the Department of Buildings in December 1926. Construction began in March 1927 and was completed by February 1928. By that point William H. Silk had become principal owner of the Barbizon and president of the Lex Ave & 63rd Street Corporation.⁸

Club Hotels, the Allerton House Company, and William H. Silk

A hybrid form, the apartment hotel or residential hotel were an immensely popular multiple dwelling type during the first decades of the 20th century.⁹ Offering more privacy than rooming houses and better accommodations for long-term occupants than transient hotels, residential hotels were equipped with standard hotel facilities such as imposing lobbies and well-appointed dining rooms and provided hotel services such as doormen, receptionists, and cleaners. They ranged from palatial residences for the wealthy with large suites of rooms with private baths (but usually pantries rather than kitchens); to one or two bedroom apartments usually occupied by single people and childless couples actively pursuing business careers; to single-room residences with both private and shared baths, which were marketed primarily to young men and women just establishing their careers. Apartment hotels were found in most cities in the United States, but were particularly popular in New York City where apartments without individual kitchens were exempt from the height limitations and fireproofing restrictions imposed by Tenement House Act of 1901. Many developers took advantage of this loophole and the number of apartment hotels multiplied until the passage of the Multiple Dwelling Act of 1929 altered height and bulk restrictions and permitted “skyscraper” apartment buildings for the first time, eliminating the economic advantages of apartment hotels.

Club hotels or residence clubs were tailored to the needs of single men and women and operated in a niche between YMCAs and YWCAs and exclusive private clubs with hotel rooms like the Yale Club or New York Athletic Club. The Allerton House Company was a pioneer in providing housing of this type. Organized in 1912 by James Cushman and William Silk with additional financing from philanthropists George W. Perkins and Arthur Curtiss James, the Allerton House Company aimed to provide the “wholesomeness of a home, the service of a hotel and the sociability of a club of modest rates.”¹⁰ Housing historian Paul Groth noted that:

Residence Clubs kept their rates down by providing very small rooms – almost exclusively single rooms – with day beds that converted to couches. ... The clubs kept staff to a minimum, especially in food service. Typically each club had its own restaurant and cafeteria or a restaurant that ran on self-service lines for breakfast and lunch and provided table service for dinner.”¹¹

However they provided generous facilities for entertainment and recreation including public lounges, libraries, and athletic facilities such as swimming pools and gymnasiums. Most residence hotels were located in fashionable downtown neighborhoods within easy distance of stores, restaurants, theaters, and offices. The Allerton chain was also noted for the quality of its architectural design and interior decoration, which “reinforced its residential and club-like atmosphere.”¹² It developed a total of six hotels in New York City from 1913 to 1924 as well as

hotels in Chicago and Cleveland.¹³ All were intended for semi-permanent guests renting on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis.

Women's Hotels and the Barbizon Club

In the period following World War I, the number of women attending college began to approach that of men for the first time. Unlike the graduates of preceding generation, three quarters of whom had intended to become teachers, the majority of women attending college in the 1920s planned on careers in business, the social sciences, or the professions. Nearly every woman student expected to obtain a job upon graduation and many intended to move to urban centers where the career opportunities were greatest.

Young women choosing to settle in New York, however, faced a major housing shortage. War-time rent controls and inflation had brought housing construction to a standstill. Apartments were difficult to find and generally too costly for young single women just establishing their careers. Alternative housing choices such as boarding houses and most residential hotels gave preferential treatment to men. A 1922 study by the Bureau of Social Hygiene found that there were 58 non-commercial residences in Manhattan for self-supporting women run by charitable institutions and religious groups, but most of these served recent immigrants and working-class women and had long waiting lists. In 1923 *Rider's New York City* guide listed only three hotels catering to businesswomen – the Martha Washington at 29 East 29th Street built in 1909 by the Woman's Hotel Company, a limited dividend corporation; the 150 room Rutledge Hotel for Women at 161-163 Lexington Hotel, opened 1914; and the newly opened Allerton House for Women on East 57th Street, which like the Allerton chain's men's hotels was marketed to college graduates and offered greater amenities and commanded a higher rate than the other two hotels. With the success of the Allerton House, plans were developed for several other residence clubs for business and professional women. These included John Russell Pope's Junior League Clubhouse at 221 East 71st Street (1927-29); Benjamin Wistar Morris's American Women's Association Building at 353 West 57th Street (1929), largely developed under the leadership of Anne Morgan; and John Mead Howell's Panhellenic House (now the Beekman Tower Hotel) at 3 Mitchell Place (1927-28, a designated New York City Landmark), primarily developed by Emily Eaton Hepburn.

With the Barbizon, William H. Silk also intended to appeal to young career women and students and created a special niche for his hotel by tailoring it specifically to the needs of the modern women pursuing careers in the arts. Thus, the hotel was named after “the famous school of French artists near the forest of Fontainebleau.”¹⁴ The hotel's first floor lounge was equipped with a stage and pipe organ and had a seating capacity of 300 to accommodate concerts and theatricals. The upper floors of the tower contained studios adapted for painters, sculptors, musicians, and drama students. The largest studios were 50 x 17 feet and two stories in height, “allowing for a gallery and exceptional lighting facilities.”¹⁵ Other studios were smaller soundproofed rooms, equipped for music students. The hotel's amenities also included a gymnasium, swimming pool, and Turkish bath, a coffee shop and Adam style dining room, lounges where the residents could entertain guests, a library, lecture rooms, an auditorium, and a solarium and large roof garden on the 18th floor. All of the bedrooms were equipped with radios and were decorated as “highly feminine boudoirs” furnished with “modern French” furniture.¹⁶ On the Lexington Avenue side of the building, there were a number of shops including a dry cleaner, hairdresser, pharmacy, millinery shop, and bookstore, which had entrances from the hotel lobby.¹⁷ The hotel also leased exhibition and meeting space to the Arts Council of New

York and meeting rooms to the Wellesley, Cornell Women's, and Mount Holyoke Clubs, and the National Junior League.¹⁸

The Design of the Barbizon Hotel¹⁹

Vigorously massed and handsomely detailed with an eclectic mixture of Italian Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance ornament, the 23-story Barbizon Hotel won critical acclaim for the high quality of its design. The building's location at the intersection of 63rd Street and Lexington Avenue with only low rise buildings to the east and south ensured that its upper stories would be highly visible from all four sides and was conducive to a sculptural treatment for the tower.

The base of the building extends for 10 bays along Lexington Avenue and 11 bays on East 63rd Street and is treated as double-story arcade faced with alternating bands of brick and stone, with giant stone pilasters separating the arches. The main entrance is on East 63rd Street; storefronts fill the bays along Lexington Avenue. Above the second story, the building sets back to form a U with its long center court facing southward. The other facades have shallow recessed courts flanked by towers with setback terraces. At the 18th story, the building sets back to form a tower which is lit by giant Gothic arched windows and rondels and capped by a hipped roof.

Because few buildings were constructed in New York City during World War I and the following recession, tall buildings erected in the early-mid 1920s, such as the Barbizon Hotel, were among the first to reflect the provisions of the 1916 Zoning Resolution, including the setbacks on the upper stories. Skyscraper architects became in the words of architect Harvey Wiley Corbett "sculptors in building masses."²⁰ Critic Matlack Price was particularly impressed with the massing of the Barbizon, writing that "seen from any point of view, it piles up well."²¹ He noted that at the Barbizon "the effect of four massive square towers at the corners, running well up the great central block of the building gives the same strong, vertical shadows that make The Shelton farther downtown Lexington Avenue one of the best buildings of its kind."²² Designed by Arthur Loomis Harmon, the Shelton, at Lexington Avenue and East 48th Street (1924), is blockier and more abstracted in its design than the Barbizon. At the Barbizon, the complex arrangement of setbacks and recessed courts creates subtle transitions between the various elements of the design and enhances the play of light and dark. Both the Shelton and Barbizon reflect Harmon's and Murgatroyd & Ogden's shared preference for North Italian sources. The Shelton is ruggedly Romanesque in detail; the Barbizon features a combination of Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance elements.

The Barbizon is considered particularly noteworthy for the "richness of its exterior brickwork." H.I. Brock, writing in the *New York Times* lauded the use of color, achieved chiefly through the brickwork that varies in hue "from rose to a greenish shade, with bits of almost black." Matlack Price also praised the textured treatment of the brick, which is "laid up with considerable diversity." The mid-section is accented with small cross-shaped recesses and projected bricks, with bands of Gothic arches, trellis moldings, and interrupted arch corbel tables setting off the setbacks. The 18th floor terraces are edged by a series of Gothic arcades and wrought iron balconies. Other noteworthy details include angled brick and terra-cotta balconies incorporating Gothic arches and corbels, traceried arches, hood moldings, blind arcades, bartizans, cable moldings, chevron moldings, and decorative water spouts. Price was particularly impressed with the detailing, praising both the simple straightforward manner in which ornament is handled and the "accuracy of scale revealing a careful and intelligent study of the whole project."²³ For the authors of *New York 1930* the strongest aspect of the building's design was

“the extraordinary roofscape with its large tower containing studios rising to form a chapel-like conclusion to the composition.”²⁴

The eighteenth-floor rooftop was particularly fine, with lounges, a restaurant, and solarium opening to Gothic arcades that edged a walkway, framing breathtaking views of the midtown skyline the inspired the photographer Samuel Gottscho.²⁵

In sum, Price believed the Barbizon to be “a definitely worthwhile contribution to the number of great towers which now distinguish midtown New York.”²⁶

Murgatroyd & Ogden²⁷

Everett F. Murgatroyd (1880-1946) was born in New York City and trained as a civil engineer. Early in his career he was associated with the architect Paul C. Hunter in the firm of Hunter & Murgatroyd. From 1900 to 1902 he was head draftsman and office manager for the Bronx architect John De Hart. In the 1910 census Murgatroyd listed his occupation as architect of factories. In 1911 he resumed his partnership with Paul C. Hunter. They practiced together until at least 1915 and had their offices at 1170 Broadway in Manhattan in the same building as Palmer Ogden’s firm, Ogden, Pryor & Day.

Palmer H. Ogden (1881-1951) was born in Dutchess County and attended Cooper Union. He established Ogden, Pryor & Day with Roy T. Pryor and Frederick (Fred) G. Day in 1909. The firm’s projects included renovations to an apartment building on Washington Square and alterations to a pair of townhouses on West 44th Street for the Italian National Club.²⁸ Pryor left the firm in 1915 to take a position at Carrere & Hastings; Ogden and Day continued to work together until about 1920.

In 1922 Murgatroyd and Ogden established a partnership and became the architects for the Allerton House hotel chain. They collaborated with Arthur Loomis Harmon, who had been the Allerton Corporation’s architect for some years, on the design of the Allerton House for Women at 57th Street and Lexington Avenue (1920-23). Murgatroyd & Ogden planned at least three more hotels for the Allerton House Corporation – the Lombard Romanesque Fraternities Club Building (now Madison Towers Hotel) at Madison Avenue and East 38th Street in New York City (1922-24), the North Italian Renaissance Hotel Allerton on North Michigan Avenue in Chicago (Fugard & Knapp associate architects, 1922-24), and the Moorish Revival Allerton Hotel (now the Parkview Apartment) in Cleveland (1926).²⁹ The Barbizon and the Art Deco Barbizon Plaza Hotel at Central Park South and Sixth Avenue (1928-30) were planned for a syndicate headed by William A. Silk, one of the founders and officers of the Allerton chain. Murgatroyd & Ogden also designed the neo-Georgian Evangeline Hotel for Women for the Salvation Army at 18 Gramercy South (1926-27, within the Gramercy Park Historic District) and the Hotel Governor Clinton (now Affinia Manhattan) at 31st Street and Madison Avenue (1927-29). In addition to their hotel work Murgatroyd & Ogden were also responsible for remodeling the house of Allerton Corporation president James S. Cushman at 815 Fifth Avenue (1925, within the Upper East Side Historic District). They also planned a 20-story store and office building on State Street in Detroit (c. 1922), the Sound View Apartments on Livingston Avenue in Mamaroneck (c. 1926); the Bellefield House Complex, part of the South Carolina winter hunting retreat of financier Bernard Baruch (1936), and projects for the 1939 World’s Fair.³⁰ Shortly before Murgatroyd’s death in 1946, Palmer Ogden began practicing on his own. At his retirement Ogden remained the architect for the Allerton Hotel chain and also worked extensively for Alexander’s Department Store in the Bronx.³¹

At Home at the Barbizon³²

In April 1931 Chase National Bank, which held the first mortgage on the Barbizon Hotel, brought foreclosure proceedings against the Lex Avenue & 63rd Street Corp., which was in arrears on its mortgage and tax payments. In July 1932, the hotel, its fixtures, and furnishings were put up for auction and bought in by a consortium of the hotel's bondholders, headed by realtor Lawrence B. Elliman, president of Pease & Elliman. The bondholders formed a new corporation, Hotel Barbizon, Inc., under the leadership of Lawrence Elliman, who secured new financing from the East River Savings Bank and got the building's tax assessment lowered. With good management and a recovering economy, the Barbizon was earning a modest profit by 1938. In 1939, the World's Fair brought many visitors and higher profits.

The hotel was quick to advertise the advantages of its location near the subway and auto routes to the fair as well as its proximity to Radio City, Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, theaters, and the city's "smart shops."³³ The hotel, which continued to bill itself as the Barbizon Club throughout the 1930s, also emphasized that it was "a cultural and social center in itself."³⁴ Events at the hotel included concerts, many by prominent musicians, which were sometimes broadcast on radio station WOR; dramatic performances by the Barbizon Players, an amateur group, and the Irish Theatre, a repertory group with players from the Abbey Theatre; art exhibits in the gallery of the Arts Council of New York; lectures sponsored by the various clubs headquartered at the hotel; and meetings of the Barbizon Book and Pen Club in the hotel library.

This rich cultural program, the special rehearsal and studio facilities, reasonable prices, and complimentary breakfasts did in fact attract a number of women pursuing careers in the arts. The 1930 census indicates that the hotel residents included an actress, fashion illustrator, professional singer, interior decorator, and photographer's model, as well as teachers, secretaries, salesclerks, librarians, nurses and a statistician.³⁵ Notable residents included actress Aline McDermott, who was living at the Barbizon in 1935-36 while she was appearing on Broadway in the *Children's Hour*,³⁶ and two young actresses who later became movie stars – Jennifer Jones (c. 1936-37) and Gene Tierney (c. 1938-39). Author Eudora Welty also stayed at the Barbizon for brief periods in the early to mid 1930s when she made several trips to New York trying to find a publisher for her first collection of short stories and her photographs of Mississippi life.³⁷ *Titanic* survivor Margaret Tobin Brown, whose life was celebrated in the Broadway musical and film, *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, passed away during her stay at the Barbizon in 1932.³⁸

During the 1940s several other young performers who later achieved stardom also resided at the Barbizon. They included comedian Peggy Cass, who moved to the Barbizon soon after she graduated high school to attend business school and seek her first show business break. Musical comedy star Elaine Stritch resided at the hotel in 1946 when she made her first appearance on Broadway in an ingénue role in *Loco*.³⁹ Actress Cloris Leachman, fresh from placing third in the Miss America contest, also resided at the hotel in 1946-47 while she was an understudy for two Broadway shows. Around 1945-46, future first lady Nancy Davis [Reagan] shared a room with another former Smith student who was also an aspiring actress. Grace Kelly, who epitomized the elegant young women that gave the hotel cachet and whose stay there was consequently much hyped by the Barbizon's advertising department, resided at the hotel for three years between 1947 and 1949 while she was studying acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and modeling part-time.

In the late 1940s the Ford Modeling Agency began housing its models at the Barbizon. A prime factor was the hotel's policy of not allowing men above the second floor recital room.

Some years later Eileen Ford commented “Where else could you put girls who were only girls? It was safe, it was a good location, and they couldn’t get out.”⁴⁰ Top models who resided at the Barbizon included Carmen Dell’Orefice, Jean Patchett, Gloria Barnes, Dolores Hawkins, Dayle Haddon, Shelley Hack, and Margo Sappington, later a dancer with the Joffrey Ballet and choreographer. Edith Bouvier Beale resided at the hotel from 1947 to 1952, while she pursued a career as a model and cabaret performer, prior to moving to Grey Gardens to care for her mother.

In the 1960s several young fashion models who later became well known actresses also lived at the Barbizon, including Candice Bergen and Cybil Shepherd. Two teenage actresses, Elizabeth Hartman, who later appeared in “The Group” with Candice Bergen and earned an Oscar nomination for her role in “A Patch of Blue,” and Liza Minnelli, also lived at the Barbizon during the early 1960s.⁴¹ Future model and actress Ali McGraw resided at the Barbizon for a month during the summer of 1958, while she was working as a Guest Editor for *Mademoiselle Magazine*. The *Mademoiselle* Guest Editor program, which ended in 1979, brought 20 young college women to the hotel each summer, while they interned at the magazine and got a taste of New York glamour through celebrity interviews, photo shoots, fashion shows, and cocktail parties. Among the young women who took part in the program and later achieved prominence were designers Betsey Johnson and Linda Allard and writers Joan Didion, Gael Greene, Francine du Plessix Gray, Ann Beattie, Diane Johnson, Mona Simpson, and most famously, Sylvia Plath, who wrote about her month working at *Mademoiselle* and her stay at the Barbizon, which she dubbed the Amazon, in *The Bell Jar*. By 1939 the hotel was also the residence for the out-of-town students attending the Katherine Gibbs secretarial school. This arrangement lasted until 1971, with the school eventually occupying four floors of the hotel and providing separate dining facilities and a lounge for its students. The Barbizon was also a preferred residence for students at the Tobe-Coburn School for Fashion Careers and the Parsons School of Design. In the 1970s the art gallery of David McKee, which handled such major New York School artists as Franz Kline and Philip Guston, also occupied commercial space at the Barbizon, lending the hotel luster.

Subsequent History

By the mid 1970s, the Barbizon was beginning to show its age and was only half filled and losing money. Realtor David M. Teitelbaum, head of Teitelbaum Holdings, a firm specializing in reviving distressed properties, was brought in to manage a renovation of the hotel’s public spaces and a publicity campaign to attract new residents.⁴² In 1980, Teitelbaum and a group of foreign investors purchased the hotel with a plan to convert it to a standard apartment building or office building. The hotel’s long-term tenants, many of them elderly and covered by rent control and rent stabilization laws, successfully fought eviction and were moved to a single wing of the hotel. A floor-by-floor renovation was begun and in February 1981 the hotel began accepting male guests. The tower studios were converted to expensive apartments with long leases in 1982. In 1983 the hotel was acquired by KLM Airlines and its name was changed to the Golden Tulip Barbizon Hotel. Renovations continued and the hotel was operated as a standard hotel with a few rent-regulated tenants. In 1988, the hotel passed to a group led by Ian Schrager and Steve Rubell, who planned to market it as an urban spa. The hotel was lost to foreclosure in 1994 but Schrager and a group of investors regained control four years later. In 2001 the hotel was acquired by the Barbizon Hotel Associates, an affiliate of BPG Properties, which operated it as part of its Melrose Hotel Chain. BPG began exterior alterations, which included removing through-the-wall air conditioning louvers, lengthening the window openings,

repairing brick and stone work and replacing the windows. In 2005, BPG began converting the building into condominium apartments. In 2011 the windows and service entrance at the east end of the East 63rd Street façade were altered.

Description

The Barbizon Hotel is a 23-story setback building located on a trapezoidal lot at the southeastern corner of Lexington Avenue and East 63rd Street. It extends for 124 feet along Lexington Avenue and 120 feet along East 63rd Street. The eastern facade is visible above the fifth story, the southern façade above the third story. The building is articulated vertically into a 3-story base, 15-story mid-section terminating at 18th story in a deep setback edged by brick arcades and railings, and topped by a 5-story chapel-like tower with giant Gothic windows. The base is almost rectangular in plan and completely fills the site. At the third story the building sets back into a u-plan with a long center light court facing southward. The other facades have shallower recessed light courts framed by pavilions that rise in a series of setbacks. All four facades are richly decorated with a mixture of North Italian Gothic, Romanesque, and Renaissance ornament and are clad with clinker bricks trimmed with beige sandstone and terra cotta.

On the street facades the base of the building is faced with alternating bands of brick and stone above a water table. The first two stories are treated as arcades with giant stone or brick-and-stone Romanesque pilasters separating the arches. There have been a number of changes to the ground story shop fronts and entrance doors. The arched second story windows appear to retain their original multi-pane casement metal window frames and arched transoms. The mid-section features decorative brick corbelling especially in the areas beneath the setbacks. By 1982, openings had been cut in the brick for through the wall air conditioners from the 3rd to 17th stories. In the 1990s some of the brick was replaced but most windows were lengthened and now have non-historic multi-pane casement windows (originally double-hung, one-over-one metal sash). The large arched window openings extending from the 19th to the 20th stories retain their historic frames but have non-historic double-hung windows replacing multi-light casements. The giant traceried windows and oculus windows at top of the tower retain their historic multi-pane windows. Some historic multi-light casements also survive on the south façade of the tower.

East 63rd Street (north) facade:

Historic: 11 bays, 3 central molded stone entrance portals and stone steps at center of facade; entrance flanked by small Gothic window surrounds with square-headed openings, which retain diamond-pane stained glass; service entrance at east of façade; decorative iron balconets resting on stone sills and corbels at second-story windows; multi-pane metal casements with fanlight transoms at second story; stone corbels (flagpole supports) on second story near entrance; decorative angled brick and stone Gothic hoods/balconies above 3rd story windows on corner pavilions (but modified by holes for air conditioner louvers); 3rd to 17th story vertical accents provided by files of decorative brick corbels, horizontal accents by decorative corbel bands; angled terra-cotta balconies and brick arcades at 18th story; 18th to 23rd stories brick corbels create diaper pattern on brick facade; triple giant arch windows, extending from 19th to 21st stories, set off by brick hood moldings and molded archivolts; multi-tiered cast-iron window surrounds with sculptural spandrel panels, tripartite windows and quatrefoil window; 21st story round windows; central 2-story gabled dormer window with brick and stone surround extending from 21st to 22nd stories crowned by arcaded pediment, terra cotta tracery; historic multi-light

sash and quatrefoil; machicolations on 22nd story parapet; brick intersecting arch molding along roofline.

Alterations: Windows replaced in 3 storefronts at west side of façade; awnings installed over storefronts; light fixtures on piers flanking storefronts; three-bay-wide canopy replacing original small balconies above entrances to lobby; polished metal-and-glass doors (originals paired metal-and-glass); globe light fixtures flanking entrance replace original metal-and-glass lanterns with decorative brackets; metal numerals added on piers flanking center entrance; flagpoles removed; window openings enlarged to create storefronts in bays to east of lobby entrance, doors replaced in service entry at east of end of façade; multi-light casements replace original metal double-hung sash windows 3rd to 18th stories; air-conditioner louvers removed and brick repaired below 4th-story windows; windows lengthened 5th to 18th stories; iron balconies installed at 10th and 14th stories, portion of brick parapets replaced by metal railings 12th and 15th stories; metal louvers at 23rd story.

Lexington Avenue (west) facade

Historic: 10 bays; symmetrical design; materials and details match East 63rd Street façade; original metal multi-light windows and transoms second story, window openings on sidewalls of center light court retain original size (sash replaced); historic multi-light sash and quatrefoil in window extending between 22nd and 23rd stories.

Alterations: Storefronts replaced (originally had individual recessed entrances in each bay); entrances with canopies created in 3rd and 9th bays (reading north to south); other storefronts have awnings; non-historic light fixtures on piers at ground story, except those framing the entrances; metal louvered screen on 2nd-story set-back conceals HVAC units; windows lengthened above 4th story except on sidewalls of center light court; windows replaced 3rd to 18th stories; double tiers of double hung windows replace multi-light casements in Gothic surrounds 19th to 20th story; metal louvers replace windows at 23rd story.

East façade

Historic: Asymmetric composition; 23-story wing with pavilions and a recessed light court culminating in a setback tower on north end of the façade; 18-story wing, which ell around a light court, at the south end of the building; massing and detailing of the north wing echoes that of primary facades, darker brick panels in center court and on south end of the facade at 16th and 17th stories; original window sash in rondels and multi-light arched window extending between the 21st and 22nd stories.

Alterations: Window openings lengthened and multi-pane casements substituted for 1-over-1 windows; 2 files of windows of at center of north pavilion sealed between 6th and 11th stories; sections of decorative parapets removed and metal railings installed on north pavilion setbacks at 12th and 14th stories; and on center parapet below the 19th story tower windows; globe light fixtures above 13th story windows on pavilions and in light court above 16th floor of tower; louvers in place of windows 23rd story; original reeded brick chimney replaced by metal exhaust pipes and vents on roof.

South facade

Historic: Asymmetrically massed wings (west 4 bays wide, east 3 bays wide) flanking deeply recessed light court (6 bays deep, 5 bays wide); massing and detailing echoes that of primary facades, panels of darker brick east set off some of the window bays; historic multi-light metal casements in tripartite windows 21st floor; original window sash in rondels and multi-light arched window extending between the 21st and 22nd stories; traceried window frames at 22nd

story flanking large Gothic window at rear of court; multi-light casements at 22nd story side walls of court.

Alterations: Window openings lengthened and multi-pane casements substituted for 1-over-1 windows; sections of decorative parapets removed and metal railings installed on west wing setbacks at 13th, 15th and 19th stories; small windows at 21st story near base large arched window on rear court sealed; metal louver replaces window on rear court wall 23rd story.

Report researched and written by
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NOTES

¹ This section on the early development of the neighborhood is adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission [LPC], *Upper East Side Historic District Extension Report* (LP-2373), prepared by Christopher D. Brazee and Jennifer Most (New York: City of New York, 2010), 5-11.

² Developer Henry Leger also built a number of brownstone-fronted houses on 62nd Street and Lexington Avenue prior to 1874. See “Executors’ Sale of Valuable Improved and Unimproved Real Estate,” *Real Estate Record & Guide* [RERG], Feb. 7, 1874.

³ Temple Beth-El was one of a number of congregations, which moved their synagogues to midtown or the Upper East Side during the 1860s and 1870s. See Andrew S. Dolkart, *Central Synagogue in Its Changing Neighborhood* (New York: Central Synagogue, 2001), 10-15. On Temple Beth-El see “Dedication of a New Synagogue,” *New York Times*, Mar. 8, 1974, 5; LPC, *Anshe Slonim Synagogue Designation Report (originally Anshe Chesed Synagogue)* (LP-1440), prepared by Virginia Kurshan (New York: City of NY, 1987). \\\

⁴ “Many Changes on Lexington Avenue,” *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 1923, RE2.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Temple Rodeph Sholom Sells 63d St. Site; Will Move Uptown, Making Way for Hotel,” *New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1926, E1. See also “Jewish Temple Sale,” *New York Times*, Mar. 14, 1926, RE16; “Prepares to Quit Temple,” *New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1926, E7.

⁷ “Temple Rodeph Sholom Sells 63rd St. Site.”

⁸ William Harton Silk (1884-1967) was born in New York City. By 1908 he was secretary of J.W. Cushman & Co., a real estate firm headed by Joseph W. and James S. Cushman. James S. Cushman was involved in a number of charities including the YMCA and that was probably his inspiration for founding the Allerton Hotel chain in association with Silk in 1912. After the completion of the company’s first hotel, Silk became its “proprietor.” He served as secretary and treasurer of the Allerton Corporation until 1927, when he left to devote his full energies to the Barbizon. With the Barbizon completed, Silk undertook an even more ambitious project, the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel at Central Park South and Sixth Avenue, a residential hotel for men and women designed especially for musicians and artists, which was completed in 1930. Both projects were highly leveraged and Silk eventually lost control of the hotels during the Depression.⁸ He was residing in California at the time of his death.

⁹ This discussion of apartment hotels is based on Cromley, 188-202; Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of CA Press, 1994), 56-87; LPC, (*Former*) *Yale Club of New York City Building (now Penn Club of New York Designation Report* (LP-2379), prepared by Jay Shockley (New York: City of New York, 2010), 3-4; Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism between the Two World Wars* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 206-208.

¹⁰Chicago Allerton House brochure quoted in Commission on Chicago Landmarks, *Allerton Hotel: 701 Michigan Avenue Designation Report* (Chicago: City of Chicago, 1998), 7.

¹¹ Groth, 80-81.

¹²Commission on Chicago Landmarks, 5. See also Stern, *New York 1930*, 208.

¹³The Allerton New York City hotels included 302 West 22nd Street (1912-13) in Chelsea; 311 Lexington Avenue (1915), which was purchased by the YWCA in 1918 and converted to a woman's hotel. The subsequent Allerton Houses were located primarily in midtown on the East Side. They were 145 East 39th Street (aka 141-147 East 39th Street, 1916-18, a designated New York City Landmark); 45 East 55th Street/551 Madison Avenue (1919); 22 East 38th Street, the Fraternities Club Building, housing a number of Greek letter fraternity clubs and alumni clubs (1922-24); and 128-130 East 57th Street (1921-23), a residence hotel for women.

¹⁴"Women's Club on Lexington Avenue," *New York Times*, June 26, 1927, RE1. See also "Reflects Modern Woman," *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1927; "The Barbizon Opened," *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1927, 47; Matlack Price, "The Barbizon," *Architectural Forum* 48 (May 1928), 677; Anne B. Covell, *The Barbizon Hotel for Women National Register Nomination Form* (Washington, D.C.: United States Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1982).

¹⁵"Women's Club on Lexington Avenue."

¹⁶ Reflects Modern Woman."

¹⁷ "Space Rented from Plans," *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1927, 44.

¹⁸ "Arts Council to Move," *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1927, E18;"Arts Council Opens Its New Quarters," *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 1927, 27; "Says Britain Exploits Others Only to Boss," *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1927, 16; Wellesley Club Rooms," *New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1927; "Job Prospects Studied," *New York Times*, Dec. 24, 1939, 22; "Junior Leagues Plan New Headquarters," *New York Times*, Apr. 20, 1928, 25; "400 at Reception of Junior Leagues," *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1928, 25.

¹⁹ For the design of the Barbizon see Price; Stern, *New York 1930*, 206-212; H. I. Brock, "Color Splashes in the City's Drabness," *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1927, SM8.

²⁰ Cited in Stern, *New York 1930*, 509.

²¹Price, 677.

²² Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴ Stern, *New York 1930*, 210.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶ Price, 677.

²⁷For Murgatroyd & Ogden see "Everett Murgatroyd," *New York Times*, Jan 28, 1946, 19; "Palmer H. Ogden," *New York Times*, Apr. 18, 1959; Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: COPAR, 1980); James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1900-1940* (Union, NJ: COPAR, 1989).

²⁸"Finest Apartment on Washington Square to Occupy Corner of Historic Interest," *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1913, 21; "Italian Club's New Home," *New York Times*, Mar. 1, 1913, 7.

²⁹See “Fraternity Club Building,” *New York Times*, Oct. 21, 1923, RE1 “Fraternity Clubs Building, *Architectural Forum*, 41 (July 1924) 9-16; “For Chicago Bachelors,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1922, 40; Commission on Chicago Landmarks, *Allerton Hotel: 701 Michigan Avenue Designation Report* (Chicago: City of Chicago, 1998).

³⁰ *New International Yearbook, 1927* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1927); “Plan Homes for ‘White Collar Man,’” *New York Times*, June 20, 1926, RE1; “2 New Fair Units to Cost \$575,000, *New York Times*, July 9, 1937, 40; “Hobcaw Barony” @ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hobcaw_Barony.

³¹Ogden Obituary; “Building Plans Filed,” *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 1945, 31; “Building Plans Filed,” *New York Times*, Oct 23, 1945, 36; Building Plans Filed,” *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1949, 51; “Building Plans Filed,” *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1950, 59.

³² This section on Barbizon residents is based on Nan Robertson, “Where the Boys Are Not,” *Saturday Evening Post* (Oct. 19, 1963), 28-33; “The Breaching of the Barbizon,” *Time* 117 (Feb. 23, 1981), 122; Michael Callahan, “Sorority on E. 63rd St.,” *Vanity Fair*, April 2010.

³³ “The Barbizon: New York’s Most Exclusive Hotel Residence for Young Women,” 1939 brochure in The New-York Historical Society, Barbizon Hotel Vertical file, n.p.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵United States Census 1930, New York, 15th Assembly District, ED311563, 6A.

³⁶“Actress Hurt by Fall,” *New York Times*, Jan. 2, 1936, 20.

³⁷Peggy Whitman Prenshaw, *Conversations with Eudora Welty* (Jackson, Miss: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), 146; Ann Waldron, *Eudora, A Writer’s Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 77.

³⁸“Mrs. J.J. Brown Dies, Survivor of the Titanic,” *New York Times*, Oct. 27, 1932, 19.

³⁹ Jerry Talmer, “Looking Forward with Elaine Stritch, *NYCPlus* 1, n. 4 (July-Aug. 2005) .

⁴⁰ Quoted in Callahan.

⁴¹“Introvert in an Extrovert Game,” *New York Times*, Mar. 27, 1966, 120; George Mair, *Under the Rainbow: The Real Liza Minnelli* (Secaucus, N.J: Brick Lane Press, 1996), 53.

⁴² “Beautifying the Barbizon,” *New York Times*, Oct. 10, 1976, 263; “Barbizon, at 49: A Tradition Survives,” *New York Times*, Mar. 13, 1977, 60.

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 Barbizon Hotel for Women 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 their important qualities, the Barbizon Hotel for Women, a 23-story apartment hotel for professional women built in 1927-28 to the designs of Murgatroyd & Ogden, is significant for its associations with women's history and for the high quality of its architectural design; that the Barbizon reflects the changes in American society during the 1920s when young women were moving to New York City in record numbers to take advantage of new professional opportunities opening to them; that the demand for inexpensive housing for single women led to the construction of several large residential hotels in Manhattan; that of these, the Barbizon, which was equipped with special studio, rehearsal and concert spaces to attract young women pursuing careers in the arts, became the most renowned; that the Barbizon continued to operate as a women's hotel until 1981 and during that time its residents included many women who later became prominent actresses, writers, designers, fashion models, and professional women, including author Sylvia Plath, who wrote about her residence at the Barbizon in *The Bell Jar*; that the Barbizon also promoted women's organizations and arts organizations such as the National Junior League, Arts Council of New York, and several women's college clubs; that the building's designers, Murgatroyd & Ogden, specialized in hotel design and that Barbizon is both an excellent example of 1920s apartment hotel design and an exceptionally fine example of the 1920s North Italian Romanesque Revival style; that the Barbizon's vigorous stepped-back massing reflects the influence of the 1916 zoning resolution and in particular the design of Arthur Loomis Harmon's Shelton Hotel; that the Barbizon is distinguished by its complex arrangement of setbacks and recessed courts, which create subtle transitions between the various elements of its design, and by the masterful handling of its eclectic mixture of North Italian Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance ornament; that the Barbizon's design has also won acclaim for the richness of its exterior brickwork, the careful proportioning of its details, and for the building's dramatically massed roofline with its 18th story Gothic arcades and chapel-like crown; that the building underwent alterations in the 1980s and 1990s and was recently converted into condominiums but still retains its significant architectural features and historic associations.

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 the Barbizon Hotel for Women, 140 East 63rd Street (AKA 136-146 East 63rd Street, 813-817 Lexington Avenue), Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1397, Lots 1501-1588 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice-Chair

Frederick Bland, Michael Devonshire, Joan Gerner, Michael Goldblum,

Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter, Commissioners



Barbizon Hotel for Women
140 East 63th Street (aka 136-146 East 63rd Street, 813-817 Lexington Avenue), Manhattan
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map 1397/Lots 1501-1588
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2012



Samuel H. Gottscho, 1928

Barbizon Hotel: "Vista of City thru three arches,"

In the Collection of the Library of Congress

"Vertical detail of terrace" and "From roof 3rd Avenue and 63rd,"

In the Collection of the Museum of the City of New York





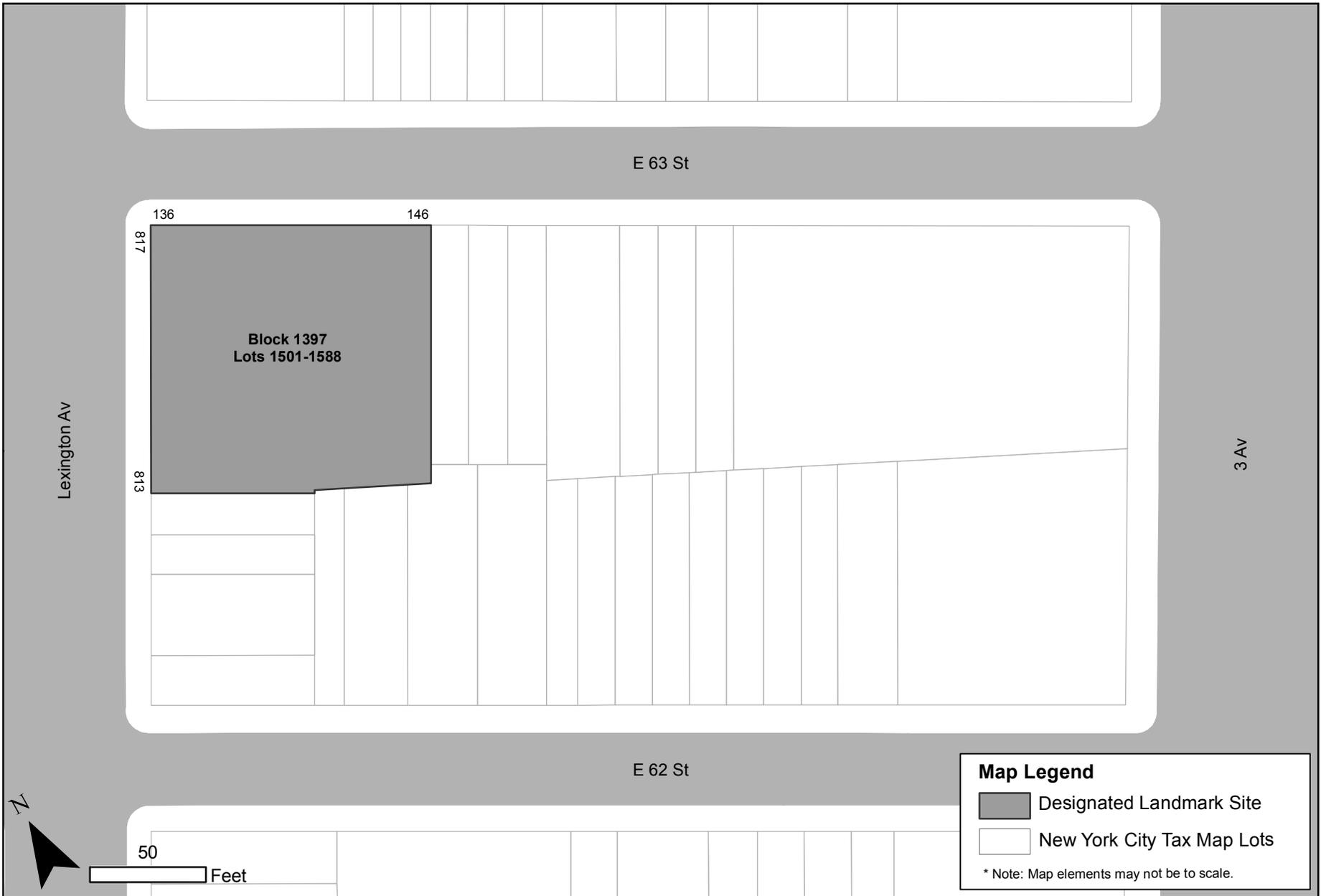
Barbizon Hotel from the southwest
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2012



Barbizon Hotel
Lexington Avenue façade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2012



Barbizon Hotel
Lexington Avenue façade
Photos: top, Gale Harris, 2011; bottom, Christopher D. Brazee, 2012



BARBIZON HOTEL FOR WOMEN (LP-2495), 140 East 63rd Street (aka 136-146 East 63rd Street, 813-817 Lexington Avenue)
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1397, Lots 1501-1588

Designated: April 17, 2012