

Barbey Building



Barbey Building

LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan
15-17 West 38th Street

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

Designed in the Renaissance Revival style by Delano & Aldrich and built in 1908-09, the 12-story Barbey Building was one of the earliest tall loft buildings in Midtown Manhattan. It is significant not only for its sophisticated architectural design with striking terra cotta ornament, but also for its relationship to the fashion and garment industries.





Barbey Building, c. 1910

Irving Underhill Collection, Museum of the City of New York

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REPORT BY

Marianne R. Hurley, Research Department

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Jessica Fletcher, Research Department

EDITED BY

Margaret Herman

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

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Barbey Building

15-17 West 38th Street, Manhattan

Designation List 546

LP-2687

Built: 1908-09

Architect: Delano & Aldrich

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map
Block 840, Lot 31

Building Identification Number (BIN):
1016002

Calendared: April 22, 2025

Public Hearing: May 20, 2025

On May 20, 2025, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Barbey Building as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Three people testified in support of designation, including representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, and the Art Deco Society. No one spoke in opposition.

Summary

Barbey Building

The Barbey Building at 15-17 West 38th Street is a striking 12-story loft and office building designed by the prominent architectural firm of Delano and Aldrich. Built in 1908-09 for Mary Lorillard Barbey (1841-1926), it was one of the earliest commercial buildings in what had been an upscale residential neighborhood. When built, it towered over the four-story rowhouses along West 38th Street. It soon became associated with the Garment Center when many fashion-related businesses moved into the neighborhood.

Henry and Mary Lorillard Barbey were wealthy New York City society members. After Henry Barbey died in 1906, his widow commissioned Delano and Aldrich to design a tall loft building that would sit on the family's townhouse lot and the property she had purchased next door, creating a 56-foot-wide frontage. As a loft building, Delano and Aldrich designed it to easily accommodate a variety of other commercial uses. The architects William A. Delano (1874-1960) and Chester H. Aldrich (1871-1940) created the firm's partnership in 1903 after both had graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. They became a highly sought-after team, designing a wide range of buildings including country estates, clubhouses, banks, townhouses, and churches, using traditional revival styles popular in the early decades of the 20th century.

With an office at 4 East 39th Street, one of the firm's earliest commissions was the Barbey Building, exhibiting a revival style that utilized Renaissance and Roman decorative terra cotta. The

building's primary facade consists of a grid of windows organized into bays within a frame of red brick. The front facade terminates in an exuberant arched parapet with the construction date in raised Roman numerals. The sophisticated design foreshadowed high-rise construction of later decades, not only with its window wall, but also with its early use of reinforced concrete.

Over the years, the Barbey Building was home to a variety of firms that included millinery and garment companies, publishing houses, architectural offices, and artists' lofts. From 1985 to 2019 the building served as the corporate headquarters for the Lord & Taylor department store located at the corner of Fifth Avenue and West 38th Street. After Lord & Taylor closed in 2019, the building underwent alterations, including recladding, at the ground floor. Overall, the building's facade remains highly intact today.

The Barbey Building is a significant example of a classically detailed loft building constructed during the transition of a residential neighborhood near Fifth Avenue to a commercial district. Its tenants included many clothing-related businesses and as such became part of the Garment Center, the hub of clothing and fashion industries in the United States during much of the 20th century.

The Barbey Building today remains an outstanding example of one of the earliest tall loft buildings constructed in what became the Midtown Garment Center.

Building Description

Barbey Building

The Barbey Building, on the north side of West 38th Street near Fifth Avenue, sits mid-block and rises 12 stories straight up from its base to its decorative arched parapet. It is taller than its immediate five-story neighbor to the east and the lot to the west is vacant. Its rectangular footprint, with a small light court on the east side, has a frontage of 56 feet and extends 98 feet to the rear of the lot.

Primary (South, West 38th Street) Facade

The front facade is organized with a base below a multi-story grid of window bays that are set within a continuous red-brick frame at the sides and top of the building. The applied ornament is red sculptural terra cotta depicting classical, primarily ancient Roman, features.

The base, or first story, is composed of three large openings: a central main entrance and a storefront at each side, all at grade.

Above the base are 11 stories of window bays set in terra-cotta. There are three bays of windows, four windows at the center bay, and three windows at each side bay. The terra-cotta spandrel panels between stories exhibit a relief of closely spaced elongated ovals.

The mezzanine level is differentiated by slightly taller window openings than the stories above. The three window bays at this level are each separated by a fluted and tapered pilaster topped with a shield and a half urn.

The third story through the 12th-story bays are divided and flanked by engaged long rods that are tied and bundled at intervals. The individual one-over-one double-hung windows themselves are

separated by terra cotta mullions.

The building terminates in an exuberantly detailed shallow-arched parapet with a prominent scrolled panel above the center bay. The panel reads MDCCCXVIII, the construction date in raised Roman numerals. Centered below the panel is a ram's head sculpture. Above the panel is a curved section edged with scrolls and anchored by two urns or urn stands. A smaller and shorter panel flanks each side of the large central panel along the parapet.

Secondary (East and West) Facades

The red brick side facades are not ornamented but have remained partially visible from the public thoroughfare since construction. Single punched three-over-three double-hung windows are visible at the stories above the sixth floor on the east side and above the fourth floor on the west side. These have a shallow arched brick lintel, but the windows themselves are square headed.

Secondary (North) Facade

The rear facade is partially visible over the three-story building at 20 West 39th Street.

Like the side facades, its red brick cladding has single punched three-over-three double-hung windows, visible at the eighth to the 11th stories. The 12th story has extra-tall window openings.

The roof's brick bulkhead, water tank, metal railings, and metal fire escape are also partially visible from West 39th Street.

Alterations

Primary (South, West 38th Street) Facade

The ground floor has been altered and reclad. The original cladding was red marble with bronze fittings. The central entrance opening lost its shallow arch with recessed entrance doors; it is now a square-headed shape with all-glass doors and surround flush with the facade and articulated with metal framing

and thin metal dividers. The storefronts on each side are similarly treated. Above each opening is prominent signage.

The mezzanine's single-light windows were replaced with double-hung windows, each one over a small, one-light window. The rest of the stories from the third through the 12th stories retain the historic configuration of one-over-one double-hung windows.

Two large urn finials were removed from each front corner of the parapet, although two urns or urn supports remain above the center bay.

Secondary Facades

Some of the windows on the secondary facades have been replaced and several window openings have been filled with brick or other materials. The brick wall below the seventh floor at the west facade is coated or painted.

History and Significance

Barbey Building

Manhattan's Midtown South¹

The Barbey Building is a 12-story loft building designed by Delano and Aldrich. It was built in 1908-09 within the northeast section of what became New York City's 20th-century Garment Center, a national hub of clothing production and sales located in Manhattan's Midtown South.²

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the area that became Midtown South was part of a broader area that spanned the lower Hudson to upper Delaware River valleys. This region was inhabited by Indigenous Peoples known as the Munsee.³ Following the nominal "sale" of Manhattan to the Dutch in 1626 the colonists drove the Munsee from Manhattan by the end of the 18th century.⁴ Much of the western section of Manhattan then became farmland and large estates and remained so until the first half of the 19th century when New York City's population dramatically increased resulting in the area's transition from large tracts of land to a street grid with building lots.⁵

After the Civil War, Midtown Manhattan became progressively residential, with mansions along Fifth Avenue and a variety of row houses along the east-west streets. In general, those who had greater wealth lived closer to Fifth Avenue while many working-class residents were farther west. Development of the area accelerated during the 1870s when elevated railways began to serve Ninth Avenue and later Sixth Avenue. The north-south avenues increasingly became the commercial and institutional spines of the area with hotels, theaters, churches, stores, and businesses.

In the early 20th century, these Midtown blocks gradually transitioned from residential to more commercial and light industry. Fifth Avenue became the location for high-end retail and the streets to the west became filled with workshops, showrooms, and offices associated with the clothing industry, ultimately becoming the Garment Center.

The Garment Center

The Barbey Building was built just as the area was beginning to transition to commercial activity. It, along with others at that time, set the stage for the development of an entire neighborhood that would become the center for the fashion and garment industries.

New York City's garment industry originated south of Canal Street in the 1850s. After the Civil War, many of the companies gradually moved north to the vicinity of Union Square (14th Street) and Ladies' Mile, occupying workspaces in lofts that were conveniently close to department and specialty stores in the area.

At the start of the 20th century, many of those department stores again moved north primarily along Fifth Avenue to 40th Street. As such the area became an important commercial corridor with fashionable retailers such as B. Altman & Company (a New York City Landmark) moving to 35th Street and Fifth Avenue in 1906.⁶

As was the pattern, loft buildings with workshops, showrooms and offices, many related to the garment industries, located near Fifth Avenue. Merchants along the avenue saw this as detrimental to their stores.⁷ As a result, a zoning resolution was passed in 1916 that regulated the location of buildings based on use, bulk, and height.⁸ It was seven years after the Barbey Building was built that the area west of Fifth Avenue became zoned for business.

The streets in the West 30s were set aside for

non-residential uses and offered lower rents for tenants. After World War I, construction of larger lofts and office buildings created New York City's 20th-century Garment Center, the hub of the fashion industry for the United States beginning in the 1920s.

West 38th Street Near Fifth Avenue

During the mid-19th century, West 38th Street near Fifth Avenue, like other east-west streets nearby, transitioned from open farmland to city lots. The section of the block where the Barbey Building now stands, was part of the Ogden Family Farm.

Beginning in 1840, lots between 18 to 25 feet wide and about 100 feet deep were created and sold.⁹ By 1867 there were continuous rows of four-story houses on both sides of West 38th Street from Fifth to Sixth avenues.¹⁰ Many residents who were heads of families belonged to the upper middle class and included lawyers, stockbrokers, physicians, and professors.¹¹

As large department stores and light industry moved northward in Manhattan at the beginning of the 20th century, loft buildings quickly replaced row houses. From 1900 to 1916, there were 14 building permits for lofts issued for lots along West 38th Street from Fifth Avenue to Sixth Avenue. In 1908 the Barbey Building was among the earliest during that period.¹² The newly constructed lofts became interspersed with the remaining row houses. Until the 1916 zoning resolution, commercial buildings with offices or light manufacturing of any height or configuration could be built in residential areas without regard to the prevailing neighborhood.

Loft (Mercantile) Buildings

Loft buildings became a ubiquitous New York City building type, with many built in the Lower East Side, Tribeca, and SoHo districts during the 19th century. These early lofts were usually four to six stories tall, constructed of masonry, and used for

light manufacturing, storage, and/or showrooms.¹³

Loft buildings were also sometimes referred to in the contemporary journals as *mercantile* buildings. They were built with unpartitioned floors supported by interior columns that could carry heavy loads and were adaptable to a variety of uses.¹⁴ Large windows at each story provided natural light for the showrooms and workspaces. The structural support was masonry until metal-frame construction was approved by the building code in 1888. After that time, taller lofts were commonly built, like the 12-story Barbey Building.¹⁵

Henry I. and Mary Lorillard Barbey

Mary Barbey, a wealthy widow, owned the property and developed the lot for what was called from its first rendering, "The Barbey Building." Although her husband Henry was a successful and wealthy businessman, Mary was also wealthy in her own right as an heir to the Lorillard Tobacco Company fortune.

Mary married Henry I. Barbey (1832-1906) in 1865.¹⁶ He was born in New York City, educated in Geneva, Switzerland, and was a financier with a business office at 36 Wall Street. He was also a director of the Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh Railroad and of the Gallatin National Bank.¹⁷ Henry bought the property at 17 West 38th Street in 1886.¹⁸ The 1900 census found Henry at the house with the help of two servants and their child.¹⁹ Not long afterwards, he died in Switzerland in 1906.²⁰

It appears Mary L. Barbey (1841-1926) also spent much of her time abroad, particularly in Paris where she had a home. Like Henry, she was born in New York City, the great granddaughter of Pierre Abraham Lorillard. He had immigrated to New York around 1760, establishing what became the successful Lorillard Tobacco Company. She was a member of the Tuxedo Club and the Colonial Dames of America.²¹

Henry and Mary had seven children, many of whom married into European families. After Henry died and his estate was resolved in 1908, Mary made plans to develop the family home at 17 West 38th Street. To create a wider frontage, she also purchased the smaller house and lot next door at 15 West 38th Street.²² With a 56' x 98' lot, she commissioned the firm of Delano and Aldrich to design a tall loft building, anticipating the transformation of the neighborhood to commercial.

Delano & Aldrich

The Barbey Building was one of Delano and Aldrich's earliest commissions. William Adams Delano (1874-1960) and Chester Holmes Aldrich (1871-1940) quickly gained a national reputation for designing a wide range of beautifully detailed buildings, often for wealthy clients. Major commissions included country estates, clubhouses, banks, townhouses, churches, hospitals, etc., using traditional revival styles popular in the early decades of the 20th century.

The two men met in 1898 while they worked as draftsmen at Carrère & Hastings preparing drawings for the New York Public Library competition. Each then attended the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris. After returning to the United States, they formed a partnership in 1903 and established a studio at 4 West 39th Street, not far from the future Barbey Building.

Their major commissions before the Barbey Building included the John D. Rockefeller estate, Kykuit, in 1903-08, and Baltimore's Walters Art Gallery in 1904, setting a pattern for their sophisticated incorporation of Renaissance and Georgian styles into their building designs.²³

Another early commission of Delano and Aldrich was the G. Schirmer Building at 5-7 East 43rd Street. It was the New York City headquarters for the successful music publishing company. Built

in 1909, this seven-story mercantile building shared similarities with the Barbey Building with its classical details and a three-bay window wall that is topped by a decorative attic story with four urns at the parapet. Both the Barbey and the G. Schirmer buildings appear to be the only loft-type buildings the firm designed.²⁴

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission has included several of the firm's buildings in its historic districts, one of the most notable being the 1916 Colony Club on Park Avenue in the Upper East Side Historic District. Their individual New York City landmarks include the 1913 Knickerbocker Club Building and the 1924 Staten Island Savings Bank. Although high-rise buildings are closely associated with New York City, the firm designed only one skyscraper, the 37-story Art Deco Wall and Hanover Building, in 1929.²⁵

Chester Aldrich retired from the firm in 1935 to become the head of the American Academy in Rome.²⁶ William Delano continued Delano and Aldrich with major commissions such as buildings for New York City's airports, work at the south portico of the White House in Washington D. C., and other highly publicized projects. He retired officially from the firm in 1950 but continued his architectural work until he died in 1960.²⁷

Construction of the Barbey Building

The Barbey Building is notable today not only as a tall Renaissance Revival loft building designed by an esteemed architectural firm before the 1916 zoning requirement for setbacks, but also for its early use of reinforced concrete.²⁸

On May 7, 1908, Delano and Aldrich applied for a Department of Buildings permit, on behalf of Mary L. Barbey, the owner, to erect a fireproof steel-frame 12-story loft building that would span two lots. The exterior walls were to be clad with brick sitting on a granite base and the open interior was to be

supported by steel columns. The initial drawings showed the installation of a grillage-type foundation, a commonly used grid of concrete and steel beams.²⁹

In July 1908 the architects submitted revised structural drawings that addressed the need to keep the columns and column footings clear of the property lines.³⁰ They proposed a system of cantilevered reinforced concrete members using the Hennebique System with structural members supplied by the pioneering French Hennebique Construction Company.³¹

As noted in the *Rise of the New York Skyscraper: 1865-1913*, the use of reinforced concrete for buildings had been introduced in New York City a few years earlier with the nearby McGraw Building on West 39th Street in 1906.³² The authors added that "...concrete was still a novelty in New York, and perhaps the Beaux-Arts training of the designing partners disposed them in favor of Hennebique."³³

In addition to the revised structural drawings in July 1908, it was announced that Chas. T. Wills, Inc. was awarded the general contract.³⁴ Wills began as a mason who soon became a construction superintendent. "A list of the buildings erected by Mr. Wills...many of the most prominent buildings of the day...shows him to have been one of the leading builders at that time."³⁵

A month later in August 1908, *The Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* noted that work was progressing on the excavation of the 12-story loft building.³⁶ The entry included not only a detailed description of the building, but also an architectural rendering of the Barbey Building as it was proposed, flanked by four-story townhouses. The new loft building was designed to easily accommodate offices adding value to the property. As noted, "...the northward trend of business is slowly but surely seeking quarters within the limits mentioned, [between 34th and 42nd streets] and it will only be a

question of a short period when loft and office space will be at a premium."³⁷

The area's large loft buildings in the new commercial sections were weighing tenant possibilities, appealing to a variety of firms needing stores on the ground floor and office space, showrooms, storerooms, and/or workshops, on the upper floors. As noted in 1912, some of the earliest tenants of the Barbey Building included Home Review Publishing Company, Columbia University's architectural school, and Architect P. H. Ohm's office and studio.³⁸

In 1914 Mary L. Barbey sold the Barbey Building along with some of her other Manhattan real estate holdings to Midcity Realty Corporation.³⁹

Design of the Barbey Building

The Barbey Building demonstrates how architects approached the design of tall buildings during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They combined the latest engineering advances of the day with a decorative style that drew on classical sources. As such, Delano and Aldrich incorporated Renaissance and Roman revival features with a steel-frame and concrete structure, a design approach emphasized at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

In addition to its classical symmetry, many of its decorative features are borrowed from classical Rome. The tall slender fascies (bundled rods) that extend from the third story to the twelfth, act like engaged columns and separate the bays of multiple windows. These represent authority and power. The ram's head with ridged horns seems to hold up the central panel at the parapet. Rams signified, among many attributes, power and resilience. Scrolls at the parapet, urns, and fluted pilasters at the second story also date from ancient Rome and are used in classically designed buildings. Most impressive of the Roman motifs is the date of construction expressed in large Roman numerals at the parapet

panel, MDCCCCVIII.

The New York Times wrote about the new Barbey Building and extolled two of its design characteristics: the dark red color scheme and the side windows.

The new twelve-story building ... will have at least two distinguishing characteristics. For the front a color scheme has been devised, which will be in marked contrast with the conventional light brick, limestone, and terra cotta of the vast majority of new structures in the uptown district...Above [*the base*] dark red brick and red terra cotta will be used. ⁴⁰

The article continued with the second distinguishing characteristic that the side elevations would avoid "...the blank wall effect, which has been so obtrusive..." in residential neighborhoods transitioning to business uses. The newspaper article added that the owner controls some adjoining property so there would be the advantage of excellent side light.⁴¹ In fact, the construction drawings that Delano and Aldrich submitted to the NYC Building Department showed the floor plans for the 2nd to the 6th stories with no side windows, and the upper 7th to the 12th stories with five single windows at each of the side elevations.

The ground floor as designed and built had a central recessed entrance within a shallow-arched opening with a storefront on each side. This first story was clad in red marble with bronze fittings. Although the first story has been altered, it maintains the symmetrical pattern of a central entrance and a storefront on each side.

Since the building predated the 1916 New York City zoning resolution, it did not need to conform to setback regulations. The architects chose

to maximize the footprint, filling the lot and rising straight up to the parapet, with a grid of windows at its front facade. The steel-frame structure allowed for maximum natural light with its windowed curtain wall, a similar design approach that has been used for most high-rise buildings since 1961.⁴²

Later History

Over the years, the Barbey Building was home to a wide variety of tenants. Particularly with its side elevation windows, the building offered more flexibility and light than other mid-block lofts. A typical floor plan showed five partitioned spaces, labeled offices or showrooms.⁴³

As the Garment Center west of Fifth Avenue grew in the 1920s and 1930s, more fashion related firms, particularly those associated with the millinery trade, found tenant space in the Barbey Building for showrooms, stockrooms, and offices.⁴⁴ For example, in 1932 many fashion and garment companies were represented such as clothing importers, textile manufacturers, and firms that specialized in notions like beads, feathers, ribbon, braid, etc. Many of the tenants were part of the millinery business, selling hats, hat supplies, and related equipment. Also listed were seven architects, one publishing company, several artists, and six engineering firms, including that of Henry G. Barbey, son of Henry I. and Mary L. Barbey.⁴⁵

In 1936 Midcity Realty sold the Barbey Building to 15-17 West 38th Street Corporation, continuing the use of the building as lofts for a range of tenants.⁴⁶ In 1959 ownership transferred to Abner Properties Co., a real estate firm established in 1933.⁴⁷

From 1985 to 2019 the building served as the corporate headquarters for the Lord & Taylor department store located at the corner of Fifth Avenue and West 38th Street.⁴⁸ As a convenience to its employees, a sky bridge (now removed)

connected the two buildings over the rear lot at 13 West 38th Street. After Lord & Taylor closed in 2019, the building's ground floor was reclad and altered with new storefronts and signage. Today, the beautifully detailed building houses a conference center and offices.

Conclusion

The Barbey Building remains an outstanding example of one of the earliest loft buildings constructed in what became the Garment Center. It was designed by the prestigious firm of Delano and Aldrich, well-known for their sophisticated classical revival buildings. The eye-catching facade includes three bays of windows framed by Renaissance-and-Roman-inspired decorative terra-cotta. Over the years, the building's flexible and well-lit spaces have accommodated a variety of tenants, particularly those associated with the fashion trade.

Endnotes

¹ This section was based on text researched and written by Jessica Fletcher, Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) Staff.

² The boundaries of the Garment Center generally extend from 25th to 42nd streets and west of Fifth Avenue. *The New York City Garment Center Study* produced by the NYC Office for Economic Development, the Department of City Planning, and the Public Development Corporation in October 1986, delineated the boundaries from 34th to 41st streets between Fifth Avenue and Tenth Avenue. The extent of Midtown South is similar, 28th to 45th streets between Lexington and Ninth Avenue.

³ *Archaeological Documentary Study No. 7 Line Extension/Hudson Yard Rezoning* (New York: New York City Transit and New York City Department of City Planning, 2004), III A-5. The term Munsee refers to the Delaware-speaking people who lived in this region whose specific dialect is termed “Munsee.” Robert S. Grumet, *The Munsee Indians: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009) 3-4 and 13-14.

⁴ *Archaeological Documentary Study 44th Street and Eleventh Avenue* (New York: New York City Transit and New York City Department of City Planning, 2008), 7.

⁵ *Archaeological Documentary Study No. 7 Line Extension/Hudson Yard Rezoning* (New York: New York City Transit and New York City Department of City Planning, 2004), III C-1-3. An 1815 map shows the division of this farmland and the presence of a few estates throughout the future Garment Center, *Maps of Farms Commonly Called the Blue Book, 1815: Drawn from the Original on File in the Street Commissioner's Office in the City of New York* (New York: City of New York, 1868), plate 5. The 1880 United States Census, New York, Manhattan, Enumeration District 404, and 1900 United States Census, New York, Manhattan, Enumeration District 306.

⁶ Similarly, Lord & Taylor (also a New York City Landmark) relocated to 38th Street in 1914, and Arnold Constable & Company relocated to 40th Street in 1915.

⁷ In 1914 there were as many as 654 factories within a block of Fifth Avenue. See “Forcing Factories from Fifth Avenue,” *The Sun*, April 1914.

⁸ The resolution created three specific use districts, residential, business, and unrestricted. George B. Ford, *New York City Building Zone Resolution: Restricting the Height and Use of Buildings and Prescribing the Minimum Sizes of Their Yards and Courts* (New York: New York Title and Mortgage Company, 1917). The resolution defined the maximum allowed mass of a building based on the height of the building and width of the street. This led to the distinctive setbacks among New York City’s buildings constructed after 1916.

⁹ New York City Register’s Office (Department of Finance, Deeds and Conveyances), Section 3 Block 840, “General Statement of Early Title.”

¹⁰ Mathew Dripps, *Plan of the City of New York*, 1867, Sheet 10.

¹¹ See United States Census, 1900. Farther west on West 38th Street, dressmakers, clerks, carpenters, and similar residents predominated, with many living in boarding houses.

¹² Christopher Gray, Office for Metropolitan History, <https://www.metrohistory.com/permit-search>. From 1900 to 1916, there were eight building applications for the north side of West 38th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues, and six on the south side, all between six and 16 stories tall.

¹³ See Andrew S. Dolkart, “The Fabric of New York City’s Garment District: Architecture and Development in an Urban Cultural Landscape,” for recap of industry.

¹⁴ Kenneth T. Jackson, Ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City, Second Edition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), “Lofts,” 762. It was not until the 1970s that lofts became synonymous with open plan apartments in remodeled loft spaces, with many still using the freight elevators for access.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Some lofts reached 20 stories at that time. The peak of loft construction was the early 1930s with many associated with the garment and fashion trade in Manhattan.

¹⁶ “Married, Barbey-Lorillard,” *New York Times*, January 13, 1865, 5. The newspaper notes they were married by

Rev. Dr. Taylor, but no location. Thomas House Taylor was then rector at Grace Episcopal Church on Broadway. <https://gracechurchnyc.org/history/>

¹⁷ “Henry I. Barbey Dies Abroad: New Yorker’s Death Occurred Near Geneva, Where He Was Educated,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1906, 7.

¹⁸ New York City Register’s Office, Liber 3015, Page 146, December 10, 1886.

¹⁹ United States Census, 1900. Servants Catherine and Edward Garrigan and their child lived at 17 West 38th Street.

²⁰ See *New York Times* obituary above. In addition to his wife, his survivors included Henry G., a naval architect, Pierre L. Barbey, and Miss Rita Barbey

²¹ Mary’s brother Pierre Lorillard IV developed the exclusive Tuxedo Park in Orange County, New York, in 1885. It began as a private hunting-and-fishing luxury retreat.

²² In addition to Lot 31, Mary Barbey also owned the adjacent lot 33 with a house on it before the Barbey Building was built. New York City Municipal Archives, In June, the Building Department’s *Inspector’s Report* noted, among other things, there were “...two old buildings standing on the premises” where construction of the Barbey Building would soon begin.

²³ Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Staten Island Savings Bank Building Designation Report LP-2201* (New York: City of New York, 2006), prepared by Marianne Percival, 3.

²⁴ Anne Walker and Peter Pennoyer, *The Architecture of Delano and Aldrich* (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 2003), 51-52 and “Catalogue Raisonne,” 184.

²⁵ The firm’s sole skyscraper, the Wall and Hanover Building, was numbered 59 Wall Street. Today it is 63 Wall Street. “William Delano, Architect, Dead,” *New York Times*, January 13, 1960, 48.

²⁶ Chester Aldrich died five years after he retired from the firm. “C. H. Aldrich Dies; Noted Architect,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1940, 19.

²⁷ “William Delano, Architect, Dead,” *New York Times*, January 13, 1960, 48.

²⁸ Sarah Bradford Landau and Carl W. Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper: 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 331-332.

²⁹ Municipal Archives; New York City, Borough of Manhattan, Department of Buildings. Block 840, lot 31;

NB 165-1908; May 7, 1908; “Application for Erection of Brick Buildings.”

³⁰ Municipal Archives: New York City, Borough of Manhattan, Department of Buildings, Architectural drawings dated July 18, 1908 by Delano and Aldrich for Mary L. Barbey.

³¹ At that time, engineers in the United States were more familiar with the Ransome system of reinforced concrete. Sarah Bradford Landau and Carl W. Condit, “Reinforced Concrete Buildings and Other Unusual Works of the Decade,” *Rise of the New York Skyscraper: 1865-1913*, 331-332.

³² Ibid. The McGraw Building is an 11-story mercantile building constructed in 1906-08 at 231-241 West 39th Street.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, July 4, 1908, 29. An article in *Engineering Record* 59 (27 March 1909; 362-63) notes a C. P. Willis as general contractor.

³⁵ Thomas J. Brady, “Leaders in the Building Trade,” *A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City* (New York: Real Estate Record Association, 1898), 319-320. Chas. T. Wills’ buildings included the Montauk Club in Brooklyn, Judson Memorial Church on Washington Square, and the University Club, all New York City Landmarks.

³⁶ *Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, August 15, 1908, 337.

³⁷ *Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, August 8, 1908, 311.

³⁸ *Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, May 18, 1912, 1044; November 28, 1914, 894.

³⁹ New York City Register’s Office, Block 840, lot 3, Section 3, Liber 191, Page 426, August 20, 1914. This conveyance included the Barbey Building property and the adjacent lot to the east, lot 34. She also sold three other parcels in Manhattan at the same time (84th Street and Madison, Walker Street and Broadway, and Avenue D between 13th and 14th streets).

⁴⁰ “Architectural Features of New 38th Street Building” *The New York Times*, July 12, 1908, 17.

⁴¹ Ibid. The Barbey Building sat on lots 31 and 33. Mary Barbey also owned the adjacent lot 34. See endnote 41.

⁴² The 1961 zoning regulation uses different criteria for size and configuration, allowing high-rise buildings to rise

straight up from the base rather than require setbacks that were mandated with the 1916 zoning.

⁴³ Municipal Archives; New York City, Borough of Manhattan, Department of Buildings. Block 840, Lot 31. Note “*To the Inspector*,” October 27, 1948, with sketch of typical floorplan of the Barbey Building.

⁴⁴ New York City Reverse Telephone Directory, 1931-32.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ New York City Register’s Office, Liber 3943, Page 444, October 31, 1936.

⁴⁷ New York City Register’s Office, Liber 5019, Page 612, June 5, 1959.

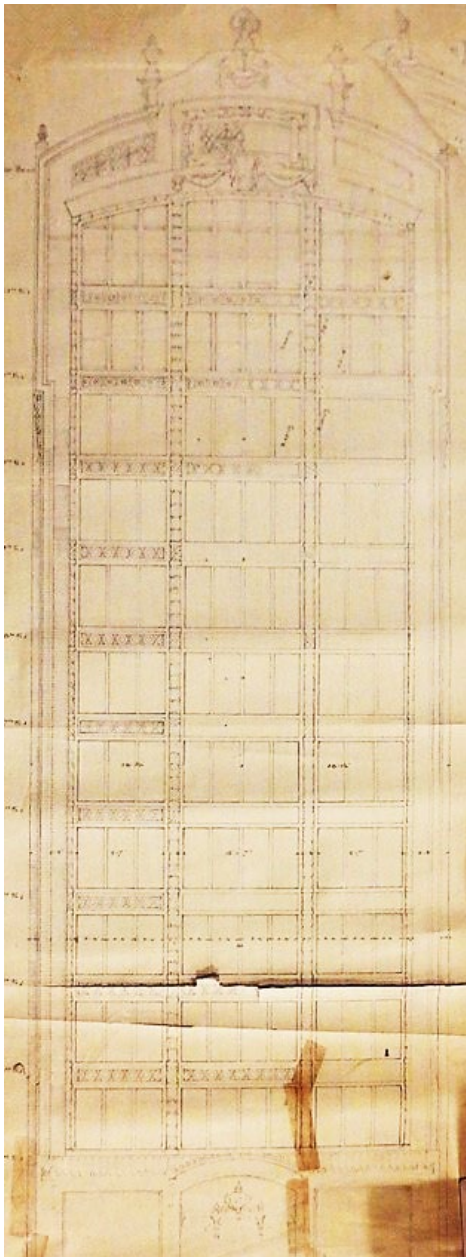
⁴⁸ Abner Properties Co. continued to own interest in the building until 2023. (Automated City Register Information System, or ACRIS, of the New York City Department of Finance)

Findings and Designation

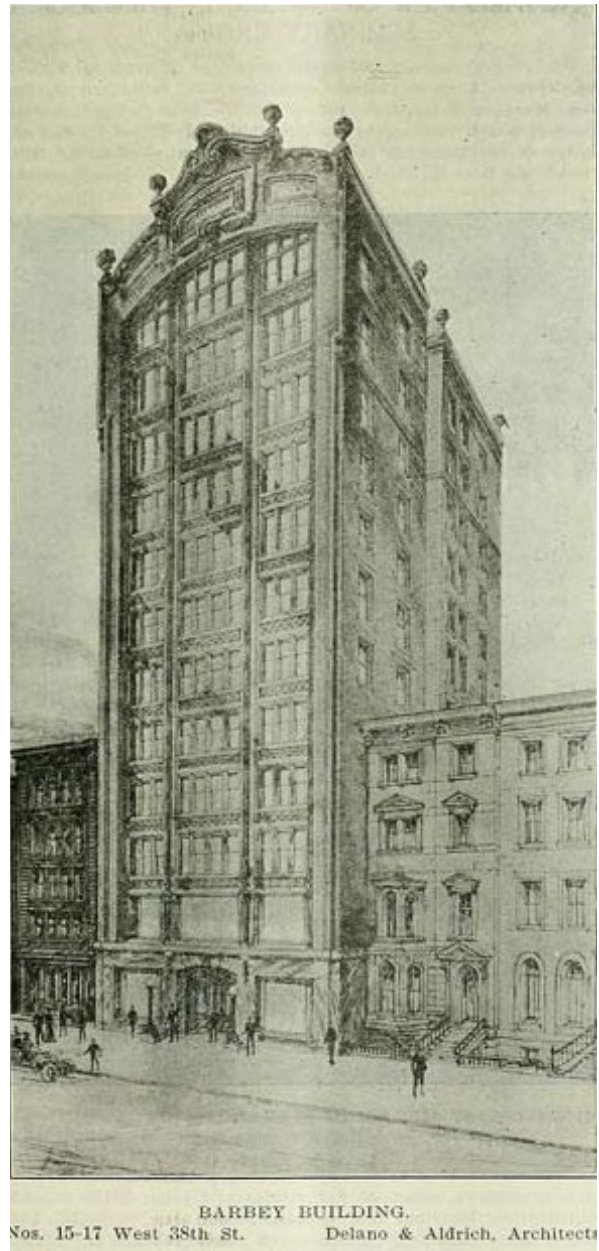
Barbey Building

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Barbey Building (has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

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 Barbey Building and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 840, Lot 31, as shown in the attached map.



15-17 West 38th Street, Delano & Aldrich, 1908
New York City Municipal Archives



Barbey Building, c. 1908
Real Estate Record and Guide, August 15, 1908



Barbey Building, 15-17 West 38th Street
Marianne Hurley, August 2025



Barbey Building, View from Fifth Avenue looking northwest
Marianne Hurley, August 2025



Barbey Building, Detail, Front Facade
Marianne Hurley, August 2025



Barbey Building, First Story
Marianne Hurley, August 2025

