

LAMARTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT
333 TO 359 WEST 29TH STREET, BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN



335 to 339 West 29th Street



343 to 347 West 29th Street

Architect(s): Unknown
Construction Date(s): ca. 1846-1847

The row houses standing since the mid-nineteenth century on West 29th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues are remarkable for their association with several well-known abolitionist families, for their connection to the Underground Railroad, and for being among the very few documented surviving structures associated with the Civil War Draft Riots of 1863, a pivotal period in New York City history. Originally constructed between 1846 and 1847 by William Torrey in association with Cyrus Mason, a professor at New York University, the houses were located on what was then known as Lamartine Place. No. 337 West 29th Street was acquired in 1851 by James S. Gibbons, a banker and writer, and husband of renowned abolitionist Abigail Hopper Gibbons. It was at No. 337 that Isaac T. Hopper, father of Abigail and a staunch abolitionist widely acknowledged as a father of the Underground Railroad, died in May 1852. The Gibbons family occupied the house for two years before acquiring the house next door at 339 West 29th Street in 1853. In his memoirs, the American lawyer and diplomat Joseph Hodges Choate who was a friend of the Gibbons family recalls dining with the Gibbons and a fugitive slave at No. 339 in 1855, citing the residence as a stop on the Underground Railroad. During the Anti Slavery Convention of 1856, it was noted that the Gibbons family invited both black and white guests to stay at their home on Lamartine Place, and in 1859, Abigail Gibbons met with abolitionist John Brown there. In September 1862, the Gibbons' home was damaged because the residents were celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation.

During the New York City Civil War Draft Riots of 1863, the house was once again attacked. The Gibbons' daughters initially escaped the mob outside the burning house by climbing over the rooftops of the neighboring homes to that of their uncle Samuel Brown who lived only a few doors away, at No. 335 West 29th Street. Later, recounting the incident in letters to family members, the girls noted how Mr. Choate, requested the assistance of a neighbor, Mr. Herrman, at the end of the block (No. 359). "Mr. Choate had a carriage waiting for us around and that to reach it we would have to go over the roofs to the last house and down through that to the street." Some of the residents of West 29th Street were not lucky enough to escape the riotous mob. A neighbor of the Gibbons', Daniel Wilson at No. 343, was beaten when he tried to address the mob to implore them not to cause further damage to his home or the others on the street. No. 353, the home of Samuel Sinclair, publisher of the *New York Tribune*, was also attacked because it was rumored that Horace Greeley, founder of the paper and a well-known abolitionist, lived there.

Although the houses in the row are apparently the same structures erected between 1846 and 1847, the buildings have undergone significant alterations. The houses were originally constructed in the Greek Revival style and stood three and a half-stories tall with a basement. Many of the houses retain their Greek Revival door surrounds, sills and stoops. Around the turn of the twentieth century, bold, projecting Renaissance Revival cornices were added to the houses and remain intact on several. Many of the buildings also received new facades at this time. With the exception of no. 341, all of the houses are presently taller than they were at the time of construction, as their rooflines were raised during the twentieth century to accommodate a full fourth story.