

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JAN 23 1980
DATE ENTERED MAR 25 1980

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
East 78th Street Houses
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
157, 159 161, 163-165 East 78th Street
CITY/TOWN
New York
STATE
New York
VICINITY OF
18
COUNTY
New York
CODE
036
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
061

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Multiple Ownership (see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
New York County Registrar's Office Building
Surrogate's Court Building

STREET & NUMBER
31 Chambers Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE
New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Landmarks Preservation Commission
LP-0421, LP-0422, LP-0423, LP-0424

DATE

1968

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

305 Broadway

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE
New York

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
—PREHISTORIC	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	—COMMUNITY PLANNING	—LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	—RELIGION
—1400-1499	—ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	—CONSERVATION	—LAW	—SCIENCE
—1500-1599	—AGRICULTURE	—ECONOMICS	—LITERATURE	—SCULPTURE
—1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	—MILITARY	—SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
—1700-1799	—ART	—ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	—COMMERCE	—EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
—1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	—INDUSTRY	—POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES: 1851 BUILDER/ARCHITECT: Henry Armstrong, builder

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The rowhouses at 157-165 East 78th Street are among the oldest rowhouses on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Built originally as a group of eleven houses, they illustrate the formation of a several-hundred-foot-long row of nearly uniform houses, an important architectural theme of the era.]

The five remaining houses, Numbers 157-165 (163-165 were joined to form one residence in 1911) were built in 1861 by speculator Henry Armstrong for working-or middle-class families. They are excellent examples of a type of structure commonly built at the time by the speculator-builder who acted as his own architect, drawing up one standard plan and then merely duplicating for each house in the row.

Sturdy and simple in ornamentation, the vernacular brick rowhouses on East 78th Street are in wonderful contrast to the more elegant brownstones and marble mansions being built at the same time. They illustrate how the architectural elements of the Italianate style, popular in residences for the wealthy, was adapted to middle-and working-class rowhouses. Whereas the luxurious rowhouses of the Federal and Greek Revival periods had been up to thirty feet wide, the rising price of land forced the builder of modest homes to erect houses on narrower lots beginning in the 1850s. The rowhouses of middle-and working-class families shrank from twenty-five to twenty or eighteen feet.² While more elegant rowhouses of the period were four or five stories high with a basement, these simpler residences are only two stories high. In addition they are built of brick, a more economical building material than brownstone which was commonly used for more expensive residences.

In 1860 New York was rapidly expanding northward, Fifth Avenue south of 42nd Street was already lined with palatial mansions. A street grid plan for the future city had been developed and a survey completed, but few of the streets above 42nd Street had been graded.³ Following the opening of East 78th Street in 1860 John Turner, a painter, purchased lots 24 through 28. A row of eleven brick houses, only five of which remain today, were erected for Turner the following year by Henry Armstrong, a builder and speculator. Infrequent groups of rowhouses were being constructed, after 1860, in the area north of 42nd Street and east of Fifth Avenue for New Yorkers who, for lower housing costs, did not mind spending longer amounts of time commuting.⁴

The row remains today as a handsome component of the streetscape and a distinctive example of the style and type of housing built in the 1860s on Manhattan's Upper East Side for working-and middle-class New Yorkers.

See Continuation Sheet

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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East 78th Street Houses
N.Y. County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4

PAGE 1

East 78th Street

157 - S. Stinor Gimbel
665 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

159 - Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Barron
159 East 78th Street
New York, N.Y. 10021

161 - Racelle Strick
161 East 78th Street
New York, N.Y. 10021

163 & 165 - Elinor Gimbel
163 East 78th Street
New York, N.Y. 10021

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Street
CONTINUATION SHEET East 78th House TEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Landmarks Preservation Commission. East 78th Street Houses Designation Reports LP-0421, LP-0422, LP-0423, LP-0424). New York: City of New York, 1968.

Lawrence, Susan Upton. "A Study of 159 East 78th Street, New York, New York." Unpublished Master's thesis, School of Architecture, Columbia University, 1979.

Lockwood, Charles. Bricks and Brownstones. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972.

----- Manhattan Moves Uptown. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976.

New York City. Department of Buildings. Plans, Permits and Dockets.

New York City. Department of Records and Information Services. Tax Assessments.

EAST 78th STREET HOUSES
New York County, N.Y.
Manhattan Land Book, Plate 112
New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1977.

MAR 25 1980
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