

Barbey Building

15 West 38th Street, Manhattan
Tax Map Block 840, Lot 31

Built: 1908-09

Architect: Delano & Aldrich

Style: Renaissance Revival

Proposed Action: Proposed for Calendarling April 22, 2025



Barbey Building, LPC

The Barbey Building at 15 West 38th Street is a striking twelve-story office and loft 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 and manufacturing buildings in an upscale 19th-century residential neighborhood.

Henry and Mary Barbey were wealthy New York City society members. After Henry died in 1906, his widow commissioned Delano and Aldrich to design a skyscraper that would stand on the family's townhouse lot and the property next door. Their neighborhood would later become the eastern edge of the Garment Center by the 1930s.

William A. Delano (1874-1960) and Chester H. Aldrich (1871-1940) established their partnership in 1903 and worked from an office on East 38th Street. One of the firm's earliest commissions was the Barbey Building which was described at the time as "French Modern." Their Ecole des Beaux Arts training enabled the firm to become a highly sought-after team, designing elegant club buildings and estate houses for wealthy clients during the ensuing decades.

The Barbey Building incorporates a grid of window bays organized within a frame of red-colored brick and terra cotta embellished with Neo-Classical ornament. Its window wall is divided by two 12-story engaged columns. The building terminates in an exuberantly detailed arched parapet with the construction date in raised Roman numerals. The building's sophisticated design with a wall of windows within a regular grid foreshadowed commercial and industrial structures of later skyscrapers.

Over the years, the Barbey Building was home to a wide 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's ground floor underwent recladding and minor alterations. The rest of the building's façade remains highly intact.

The Barbey Building is an architecturally significant early skyscraper that anticipated the future Garment Center's move into Midtown by accommodating not only the fashion trade industry, but also a wide range of offices, and studios.

