



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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December 18, 2023

Sarah Carroll, Chair
Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Follow Up 50 West 13th Street, Manhattan

Dear Chair Carroll and Ms. Lemos McHale,

HDC is writing once more in support of Village Preservation's campaign to secure individual landmark status for 50 West 13th street.

HDC had previously sent a letter in 2021 in support of this building citing Village Preservation's research documenting this property as the home of the Black businessman and abolitionist Jacob Day. Now, we write in support of additional research that confirms that the Black abolitionist, suffragist and educator Sarah J. S. Tompkins Garnet also resided in this building in the 1860s and 1870s. While it had been previously known that Ms. Garnet and her second husband, the preacher, abolitionist and statesman Henry Highland Garnet, lived at 175 MacDougal Street from 1880-1883, it was not known that they lived elsewhere in the Village.

The Garnets' residence at 50 West 13th Street helps paint a broader picture of the Black community in 19th Century Greenwich Village known as "Little Africa," and helps draw a connection between this building and other landmarked and unlandmarked sites of Black History throughout New York city. For example, Sarah Smith Garnet, who founded the first suffrage organization in the United States organized by and for Black women, was also the first Black principal within what became the New York City Public School system. She taught and held administrative positions at the African Free School in Williamsburg, and the recently-landmarked Former "Colored" School No. 4 at 128 West 17th Street.

We urge the LPC to consider this history in light of its 2021 Equity Framework that holds that the LPC will designate properties that tell the stories of all New Yorkers. This site tells many stories. Beyond its deep relationship with 19th Century Black history in New York, 50 West 13th Street was one of the oldest and longest continuously operating Off-Off Broadway theaters in the city, home to the 13th Street Repertory Theater from 1958 - 2022.

Since the theater's closing in 2022, 50 West 13th Street has fallen into disrepair. It is urgent that this building be protected, and that its history be safeguarded. We ask the LPC to move forward with the

designation process for 50 West 13th street so that its significant history and varied New York stories may be shared with this and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frampton Tolbert", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Frampton Tolbert