

September 14, 2022

Hon. Eric Adams  
Mayor, City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

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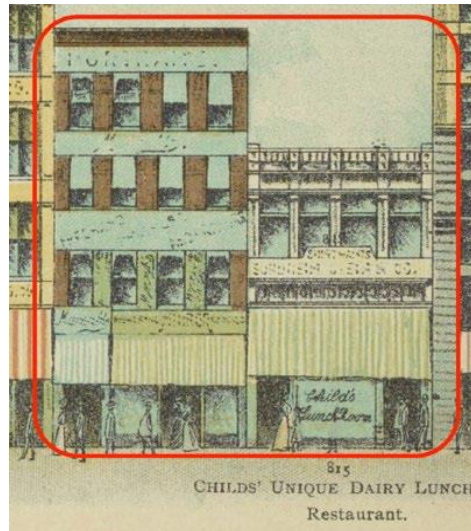
232 EAST 11TH STREET  
NEW YORK NY 10003  
212-475-9585  
VILLAGEPRESERVATION.ORG

Hon. Sarah Carroll  
Chair, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission  
One Centre Street, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

**RE: Imminent danger to 813 and 815 Broadway in the proposed  
South of Union Square Historic District**

Dear Mayor Adams and Chair Carroll,

Full demolition permits were recently filed with the Department of Buildings for 813 and 815 Broadway (Job No. 123906087), two exceptionally historically significant buildings located in the proposed South of Union Square Historic District, which has been recognized as State and National Register-eligible. Village Preservation detailed an overview of the historic significance of these buildings in a [letter sent to the](#)  
[Landmarks Preservation Commission](#)  
[on November 12, 2019](#), and we are now providing an even more in depth accounting of the extremely important role that these two buildings played in the life of our city and country, particularly in relation to public health, the Union and anti-slavery cause during the Civil War, and American art, commerce, and popular culture. I urge you to act immediately to protect them and the entire proposed South of Union



Left: 813 and 815 Broadway circa 1899, "Broadway, West Side. 10th to 12th St," A Pictorial Description of Broadway, Mail & Express, 1899. The New York Public Library Digital Collections. Right: 813 and 815 Broadway circa 2022.



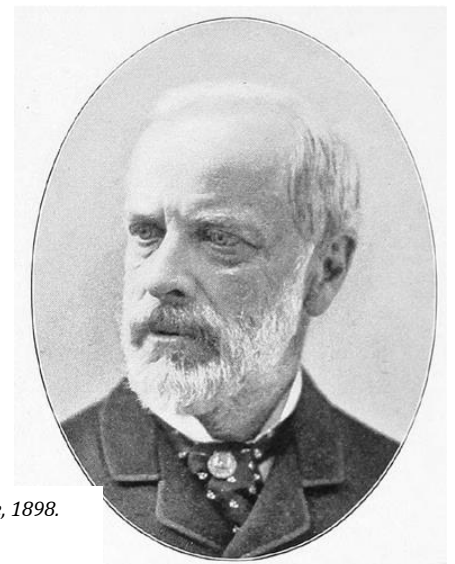
813 Broadway in 1913, circa 1940, and 2022.

Square Historic District from this imminent and expanding danger of loss to this historically significant neighborhood.

**No. 813 Broadway is a four-story residential and commercial building**

constructed around 1850 as an investment property for Peter Goelet, a prominent New York City merchant and real estate entrepreneur. The Goelet family were French Huguenots who arrived in New York in the early 18th century and rose to prominence in the years that followed. Peter Goelet, who shared a name with his father and grandfather, was an eccentric hermit who quietly amassed a fortune through careful management of his real estate holdings. Goelet leveraged the family farmland, a parcel just north of Union Square, and the real estate procured by the family hardware business on Pearl Street, to grow a real estate empire from \$500,000 in 1831 to over \$12,000,000 – the equivalent of \$355,000,000 today – at time of his death in 1879. While the building has lost some of its decorative features over the years, it retains the same overall architectural character as in the above 1899 illustration and 1913 photo from much of its period of significance, and bears a strong relationship to its original form.

The building has profound historic significance in relation to the Civil War when it served as the Hall of the Loyal National League. This organization was founded to support the Union army and abolition of slavery during the Civil War. James A. Roosevelt, uncle to President Theodore Roosevelt, was the organization's secretary and figurehead. Significant leaders of the League included poet, journalist, and editor William Cullen Bryant; entrepreneur and department store magnate A.T. Stewart; New York City Mayor George Opdyke; Wall Street "Merchant Prince" William Earl Dodge; noted jurist William Curtis Noyes; former Navy Secretary and Annapolis-founder George Bancroft; and merchant and Union Pacific Railroad Director John J. Cisco, among others. The executive committee included figures such as General and Congressman John Cochrane; leading abolitionist and Republican Party founder John Jay; and abolitionist/journalist, Underground Railroad supporter and National Anti-Slavery Standard editor Sidney Howard Gay. In 1863, the organization voted to create the Loyal Publication Society to publish



James Alfred Roosevelt, Secretary of the Loyal National League, 1898.



and distribute writings in favor of the Union and abolition of slavery. According to an 1863 issue of Vanity Fair, the Loyal National League reading room was open to the public every day except Sunday to spread the abolition message and support for the Union cause. The League, which

included both Democrats and Republicans, played a crucial role in rallying support for the Union cause and against slavery in New York City, which was rife with confederate sympathizers and businesses with financial ties to the South and slavery.

No. 813 Broadway was also the home to the Citizens' Association of New York, an organization formed in 1863 which had a profoundly influential role in shaping public health policy in New

York and the country, instituting reforms, the legacies of which remain with us today. The Association was founded by prominent New Yorkers including Governor, Senator, and Secretary of State Hamilton Fish; prominent merchant and philanthropist John David (J.D.) Wolfe; financier and philanthropist John Jacob Astor III; businessman, arts patron, and philanthropist [Jonathan Sturges](#); Robert B. Roosevelt, politician and uncle and mentor to Teddy Roosevelt; financier, diplomat, Democratic National Committee Chair and Belmont Stakes-founder August Belmont; first Catholic American Presidential candidate Charles O'Connor; and railroad magnate and financier Morris Ketchum. While its stated mission was to reform the New York City government to more effectively utilize tax dollars to improve the quality of life in the city, the Citizens' Association of New York's efforts focused on radically reshaping and reforming public health standards and practices in the city.

In 1864, the Citizens' Association formed the Council on Hygiene and Public Health to underwrite a survey of sanitary and living conditions throughout 31 districts in New York City, undertaking the remarkable and unprecedented task of visiting and interviewing residents of every household in New York City to amass a comprehensive picture of current conditions and propose improvements. Completed in 1865, the Report of the Citizens' Association of New York Upon the Sanitary Conditions of the City included over 300 pages of ward-by-ward documentation of sanitary conditions, illness, population density, demographics, urban environment, and more in the form of detailed written descriptions and maps. At the time of its publication, [the New York Times described](#) its impact and unprecedented nature thus:

*At last we have a reliable report upon the social condition of New-York City; a report, moreover, that is no common one; no more compilation of statistical data, overpowering*

## THE LOYAL NATIONAL LEAGUE.

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#### PLEDGE OF THE LOYAL NATIONAL LEAGUE.

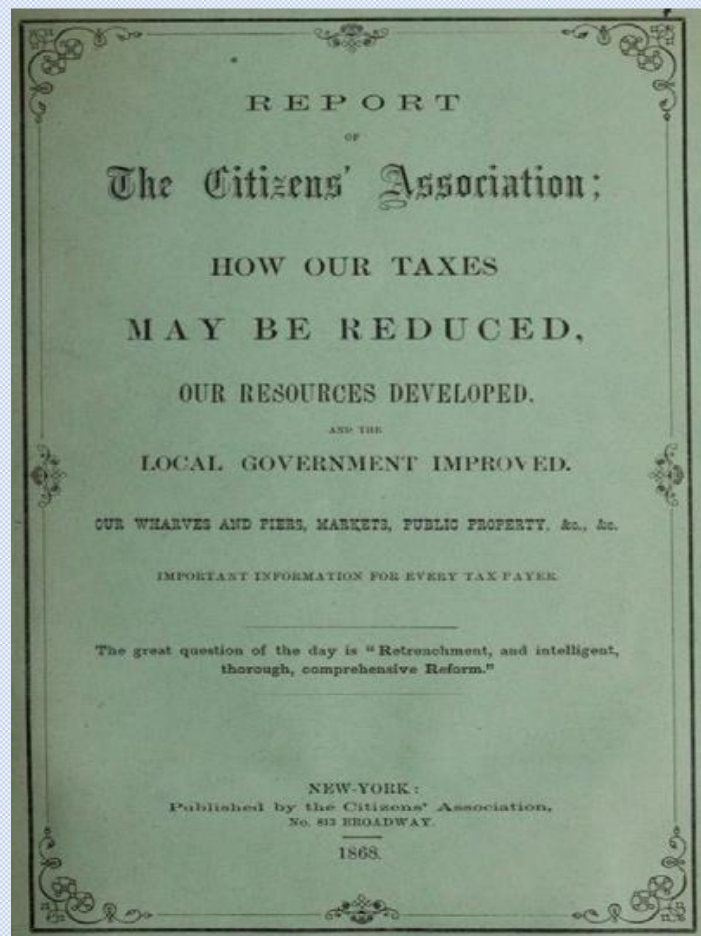
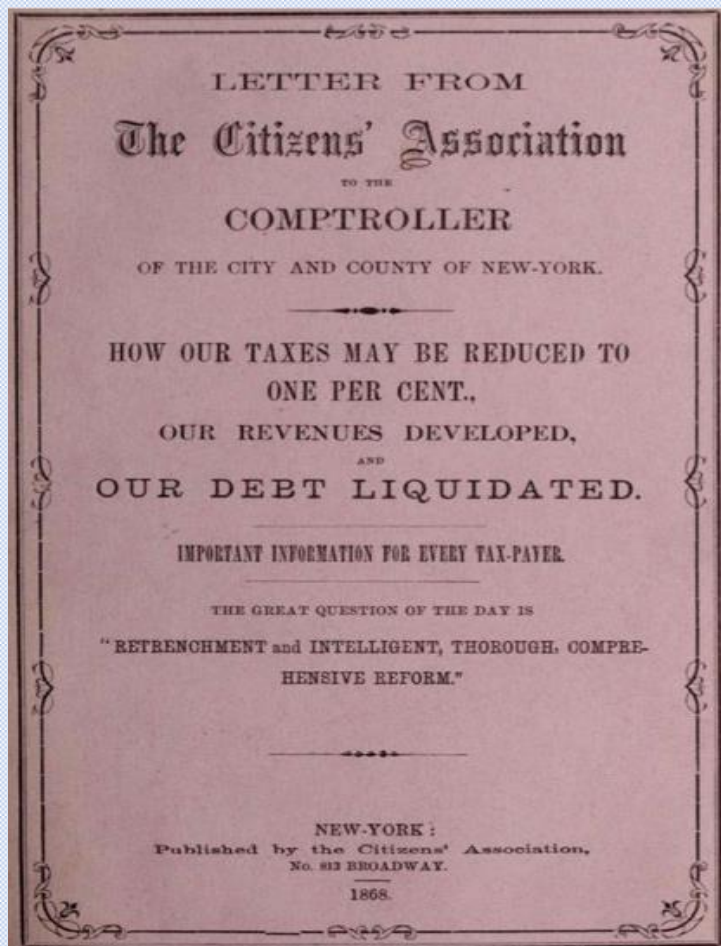
We, the undersigned, Citizens of the United States, hereby associate ourselves under the name and title of the LOYAL NATIONAL LEAGUE.

We pledge ourselves to an unconditional loyalty to the Government of the United States, to an unwavering support of its efforts to suppress the Rebellion, and to spare no endeavor to maintain unimpaired the National Unity, both in principle and territorial boundary.

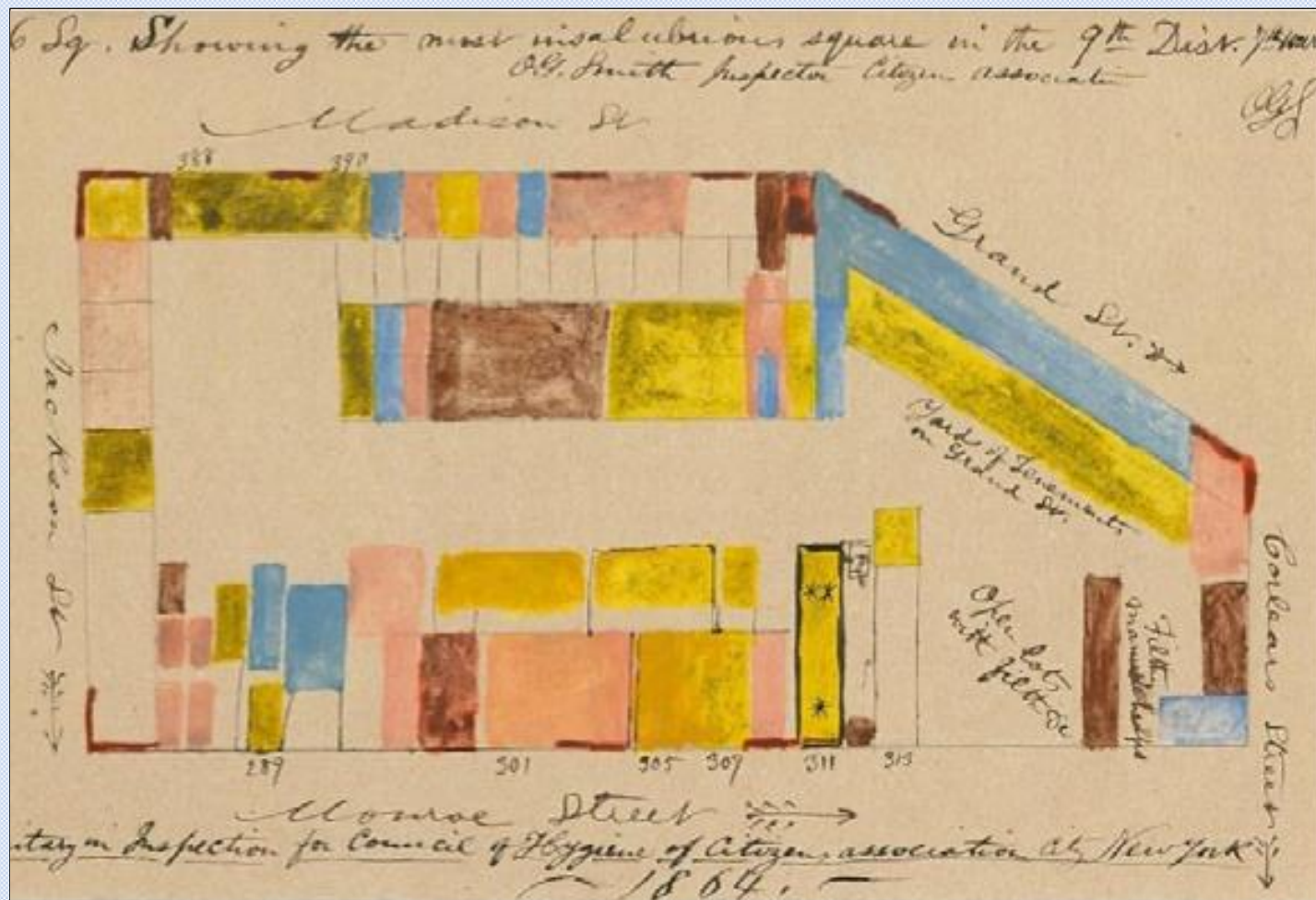
The primary object of this League is, and shall be, to bind together all Loyal men, of all trades and professions, in a common union, to maintain the power, glory, and integrity of the Nation.

*Hall of the Loyal National League,*

813 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, April 20th, 1863.



(above) Reports issued by the Citizens' Association from 813 Broadway. (below) Record of Sanitary Inquiry, 7th ward, 9th District, New-York Historical Society.

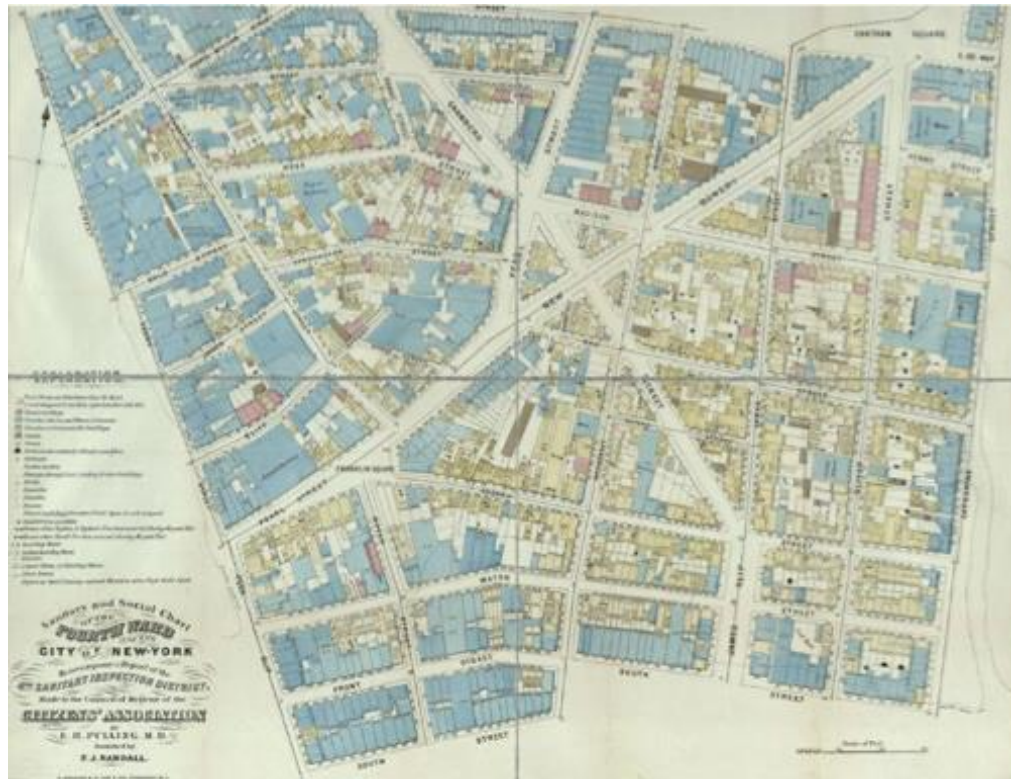




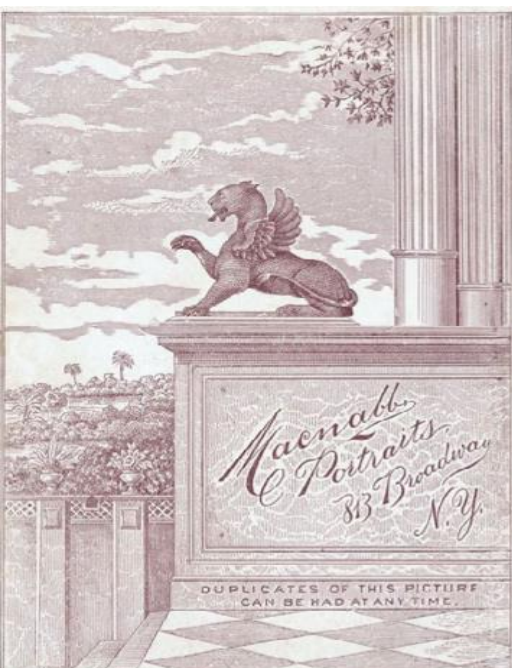
*with figures and perplexing with misstatements. This is a book demanding and arresting attention; a live book; remarkable, not more for the extent of research and magnitude of labor involved in its preparation, than for the public spirit it represents and whereof it is the offspring.*

This groundbreaking report led to the founding of the Metropolitan Board of Health, the first modern municipal public health authority in the United States, and the forerunner of today's NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and countless municipal health departments and boards across the country. The report did nothing short of revolutionizing the practice of public health in New York City and throughout the country.

No. 813 Broadway is also significant to the history of photography. Francis P. Macnabb, "a leading photographer" according to the 1885 edition of New York's Great Industries Exchange and Commercial Review: Merchants and Manufacturers, opened his photography studio at this address around 1875. Not only was Macnabb highly sought after for his technical skill, the studio's "central location" was a draw for sitters. The studio operated out of this location for over 35 years.



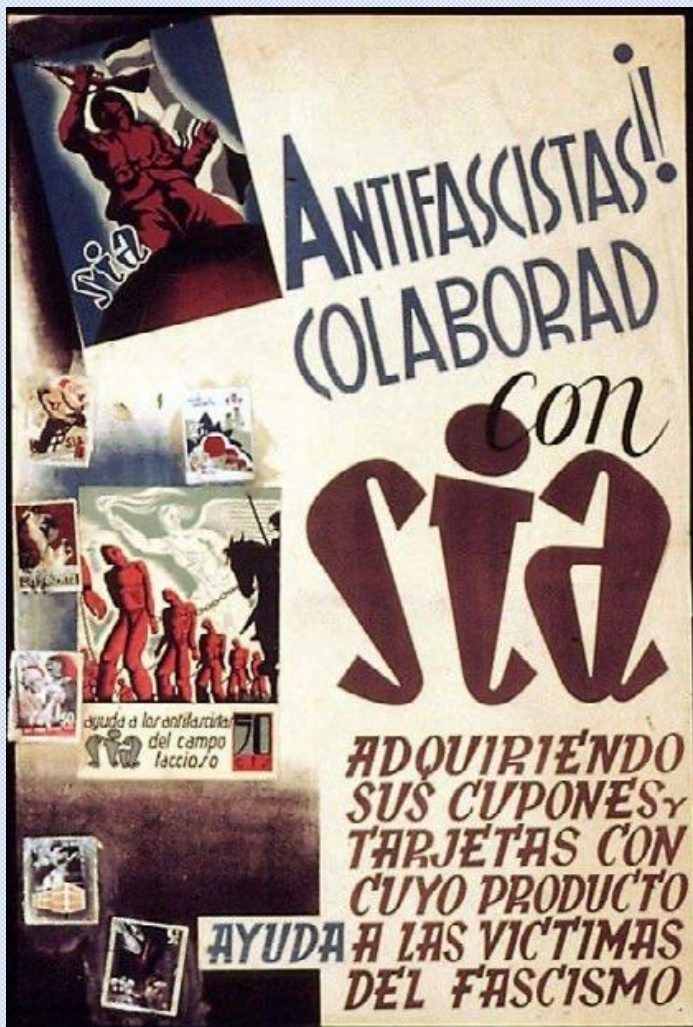
*Map of the Fourth Ward of the City of New York. Report of the Council of Hygiene and Public Health of the Citizens' Association of New York. New York: Appleton, 1865.*



No. 813 Broadway's significance did not end with the 19th century, but rather evolved to one connected to radical politics and the arts, rather than commerce and establishment politics, as was reflective of the evolution of this area in the 20th century into a center of revolutionary ideas in the arts and social movements.

*19th century Macnabb cabinet cards from 813 Broadway*





Posters of the Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista

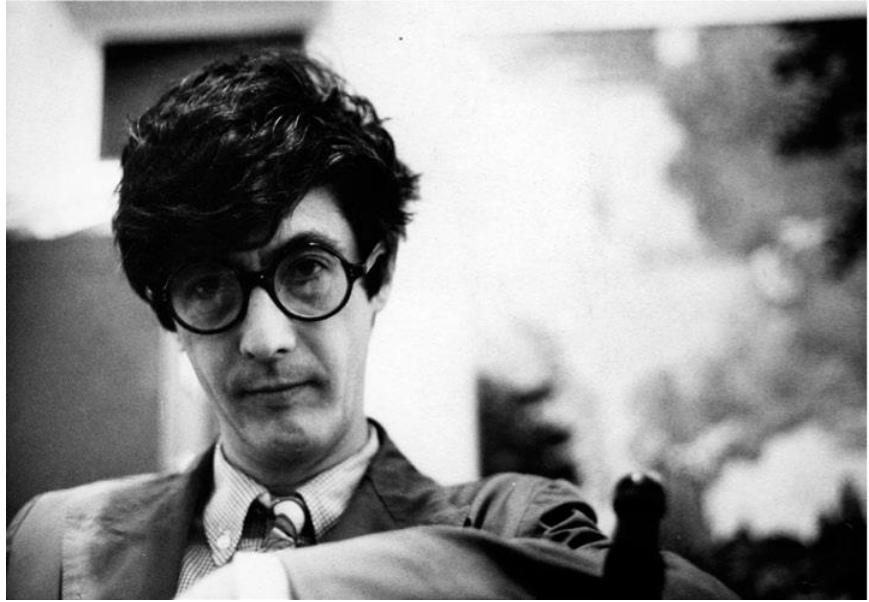




*Richard Bellamy, 1967*

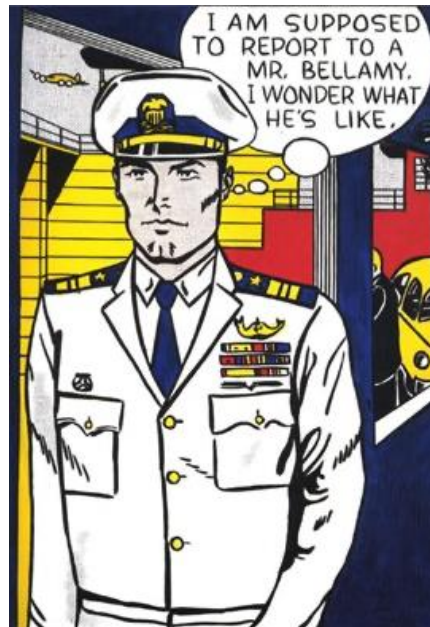
From the 1930s to the 1960s, the building was home to prominent radical anarchist political organizations. The Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (SIA), a humanitarian organization founded in 1937 in Valencia, Spain to support the Spanish Libertarian Movement and spread anarchist ideas during the Spanish Civil War, occupied the 2nd floor of 813 Broadway during this time. The New York branch of SIA was dedicated to aiding

imprisoned and exiled Spanish anarchists along with other victims of the Spanish Civil War. Anatole Dolgoff, son of influential anarchist Sam Dolgoff, wrote in his memoir *Left of the Left* that 813 Broadway, referred to as the SIA Hall, was an “essential place to be if you really wanted to know what was going on in Spain and Latin America.” In 1954, the SIA Hall became the first home of the Libertarian League, an organization founded by Sam Dolgoff, Esther Dolgoff, and Russel Blackwell to promote anarchist ideals and thought. Forums, book clubs, and weekly political discussions were held here.



In the 1950s, 813 Broadway became an important studio and exhibition space for groundbreaking visual artists who were part of the post-War shift of the center of the western art world from Paris to New York, including Miles Forst, John Grillo, Lester Johnson, Felix Pasilis, Wolf Kahn, and Jan Müller, and was itself a namesake for a transformative art exhibition. In 1951, these artists teamed up with gallerist Richard Bellamy to present a building-wide show of new work titled *813 Broadway*. According to Bellamy’s 1963 oral history in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, this exhibition proclaimed a renewed interest in figurative painting in response to the burgeoning popularity of abstract expressionism. The success of *813 Broadway* in the eyes of critics and fellow artists alike laid the foundation for the cooperative nature of what would become Bellamy’s Hansa Gallery in the fall of 1952 and the cooperative artist galleries that would form throughout and profoundly shape the downtown art scene. This

exhibition also played a role in establishing Richard Bellamy as a silent but eminently powerful tastemaker in contemporary American art, and as



*Works featuring Richard Bellamy by Alex Katz, George Segal, and Roy Lichtenstein.*

“the dealer whose gallery would become so central to the history of contemporary art” according to [ARTnews](#).

While 813 Broadway has stand-alone elements of critical historic significance, it is also part and parcel of the overarching story of the significance of the area South of Union Square. It is one of several sites in the neighborhood with strong historic connections to [the Civil War](#), [the Roosevelts](#), [anti-fascist movements](#), [American politics](#), [photography](#), and [American art](#).

**The diminutive building at No. 815 Broadway played an outsized role in the development of American mass commerce at the turn of the last century and into the 20th century.**

This 2-story neo-Renaissance style galvanized iron-faced commercial building was constructed in 1897 by John C. Westervelt for Roosevelt & Co. It miraculously maintains the original distinctive intricate iron detailing on the second floor of the building. This small storefront was one of the first independent architectural commissions of Westervelt, who graduated from Cornell University in 1894 and enjoyed a long and lucrative career as an architect, including as the in-house architect for the Childs Restaurant Chain. It was around the time of the construction of 815 Broadway that John C. Westervelt began his working relationship with Childs Restaurants.



*815 Broadway (l. to r.) in 1913, ca. 1940, and 2022*

Founded just a few years before in 1889 by brothers Samuel and William Childs as a quick, clean, and affordable lunch counter, Childs Restaurant grew to become one of the first national dining chains in North America, with over 107 locations in 29 cities at its peak in 1925. The Childs Restaurant at 815 Broadway was likely the first purpose-built Childs Restaurant. While the Roosevelt family financed the construction of this building, Samuel and William Childs



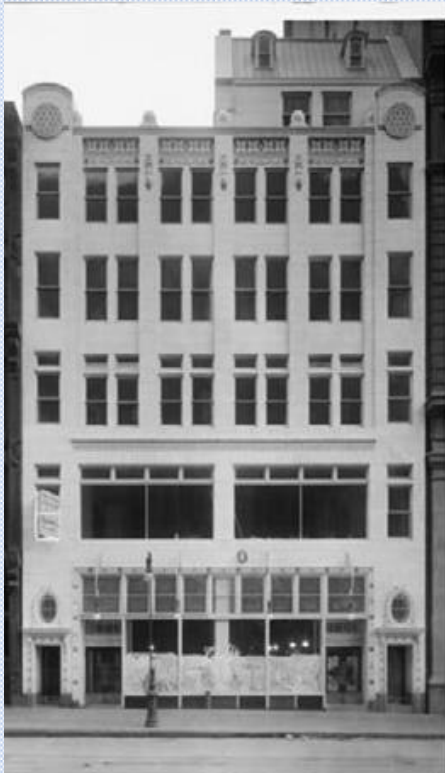


*Child's  
Restaurant  
interiors, late  
19<sup>th</sup> and early  
20<sup>th</sup> centuries.*

signed a 20-year lease for the storefront as soon as construction began in early 1897. An 1898 entry in the Real Estate Records and Builders Guide further documents the working relationship between Childs and Roosevelt & Co. through the purchase of “restaurant fixtures.” This collaboration between tenant and developer illustrates how the design of 815 Broadway was likely conceived around the brand identity of Childs.

But 815 Broadway was more than just the likely first purpose-built Child’s restaurant; it was the place where a distinctly American mass marketing aesthetic which would impact American commerce and popular culture for generations was introduced. At the time of the construction of 815 Broadway, Childs Restaurant was a nascent chain of just 9 locations throughout New York City. All prior locations were stationed in existing buildings whose storefronts were altered to meet the brand aesthetic. The opening of Childs Unique Dairy Lunch at 815 Broadway around 1898 coincided with the company’s incorporation in New York state as Childs Unique Dairy Company. With \$1,000,000 in funding, Childs grew rapidly in the first decades of the 20th century and its real estate holdings became an important part of the company’s business model. John C. Westervelt designed numerous buildings for Childs from free standing restaurants to commercial buildings with a restaurant storefront. Westervelt’s balanced and refined Neo-Renaissance storefront at 815 Broadway set the standard for Childs “austerely-elegant” style, with white tile, mirrors, bentwood furniture and exposed ceiling fans. The patterning of Westervelt’s prototype design at 815 Broadway is particularly evident in his designs for 184 Fifth Avenue (1910), 194 Broadway (1910), and 12 Park Row (1915), and would influence mass marketed “lunch counter” dining spaces and diners for decades to follow.

Even as the Childs’ aesthetic began to pivot toward a reserved Spanish Revival style as seen in the landmarked Childs Restaurant Building at 1208 Surf Avenue on Coney Island (designed by Westervelt in 1917), the elegant geometry in Westervelt’s 1897 design for 815 Broadway was highly influential. The emphasis on cleanliness, bright windows, gleaming white tile and marble, along with the exposed industrial features of the restaurants’ interiors, are viewed by many architectural historians as a turning point in the modernization of American dining.



(top left to bottom right) 815 Broadway (1897; extant ); , 184 Fifth Avenue (1910; extant); 194 Broadway (1910, demolished); 12 Park Row (1915; demolished); and 1208 Surf Avenue (1917; extant and landmarked).





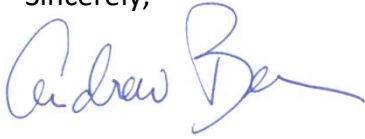
*Intact façade details on 815 Broadway.*

Like 813 Broadway, while 815 Broadway has stand-alone elements of critical historic significance, it is also part and parcel of the overarching story of the significance of the area South of Union Square. It is one of several sites in the neighborhood with strong historic connections to [the Roosevelts](#), [the development of commerce in America](#) (and [here](#)), and [American popular culture](#).

Over the years, Village Preservation has submitted [14 requests for evaluation](#), over [60 letters of support](#) for landmark designation of this district from elected officials, scholars, academics, authors, civil rights organizations, and leading preservationists and advocates, and received a [determination of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places](#) from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for our proposed historic district South of Union Square. Most recently, the district was selected as one of the Preservation League of [New York State's 2022-2023 "Seven to Save"](#) — the seven most important, endangered historic sites in New York State. The impending demolition of these two historic buildings and the potential for out-of-context development that could seriously alter the rhythm of one of the most significant corridors in the proposed district illustrate the urgency of the need to protect this neighborhood.

Nos. 813 and 815 Broadway are just two of the exceptionally significant buildings in our proposed South of Union Square Historic District. They are now in imminent danger of being lost due to a lack of landmark protections. I urge you to act swiftly to designate the South of Union Square Historic District so no more of this exceptional history is lost.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andrew Berman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director

Cc: New York State Historic Preservation Office  
Preservation League of NYS  
Borough President Mark Levine  
State Senator Brad Hoylman  
City Councilmember Carlina Rivera  
State Assemblymember Deborah Glick  
Community Board 2, Manhattan