

52 Greene St - Historic Report

10013



Commercial



SoHo, New York



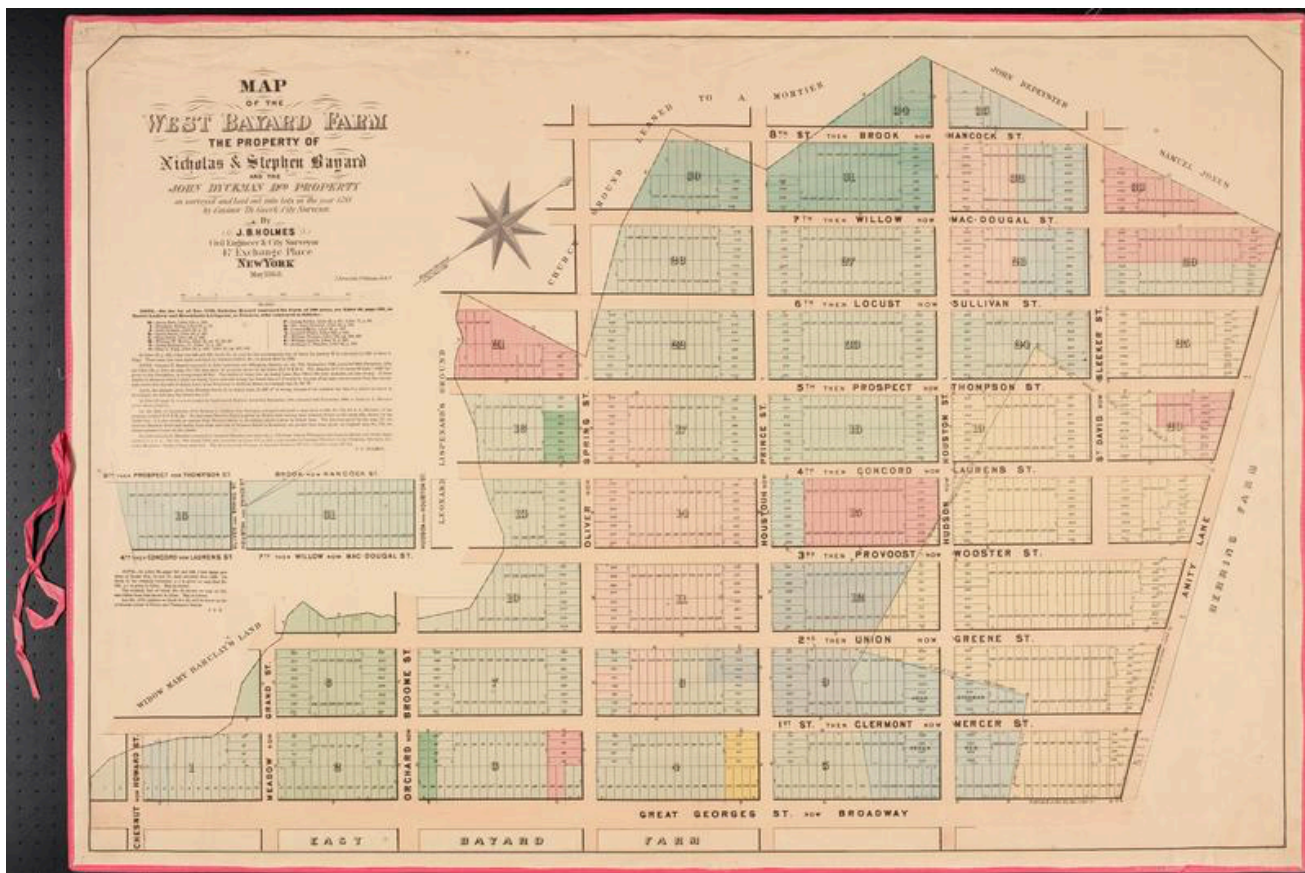
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52 Greene, originally a five-story building completed in 1867, was owned and developed by H. J. Howard, the man behind several other buildings in the Cast Iron District. H. J. Howard also built neighboring 46-50 Greene Street.¹ According to a New York Times article from 1861 his transformation of the block “appeared little less than the work of magic”. Previously lined with “small buildings ... having no attractions whatever,” H.J. Howard shaped the surrounding area into a block that comprised of “fine structures, embellished with all the skill of mechanical art, and affording to merchants and manufacturers advantages which can nowhere be surpassed.”²

It is an excellent example of the mixed iron and masonry construction of the post-Civil war period. Perimeter masonry load-bearing walls enclose a massive timber structure. Although it was first developed as a commercial and manufacturing warehouse, 52 Greene saw many uses over the years.

The land 52 Greene sits on was previously owned by the established Bayard Family, relatives of Peter Stuyvesant, and was part of the West Bayard Farm. In 1788 C. Goerk was hired to survey and lay out streets west of Broadway so the land could be sold in lots as can be seen in the Goerk map from 1788.³



¹ (The New York Times 1861)

² (The New York Times 1861)

³ (Goerck and Holmes 1868)

From 1855 to 1862, 52 Greene became the home of the American Hose Company No. 19, a volunteer fire company in Manhattan.^{4 5 6} The company, which comprised roughly of 20 men over the years, housed 900ft of hose in 52 Greene. Some stationers, engineers, and clerks of the company resided in 52 Greene during this time.^{7 8}

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Following the current building's completion in 1867, J.F. Trow moved his publishing business from across the street into 52 Greene and began publishing and selling the influential New York City Directory from 52 Greene until 1873.⁹ Wilson H. was the editor of the city directory and also published and sold his own Wilson's Business and Street and Avenue Directories from 52 Greene. The McLoughlin Brothers, another publishing company, also used the building from May 1870 to February 1871.¹⁰

After the publishing companies, Trow's city directory shows various textile and silk merchants as tenants in the building up to the 1920s. Robert Thorp & Sons (from 1879-1880)^{11 12}, manufacturers and importers of Silk, Alpaca and Mohair Braids; W.M. Maurice Lilienthal (1888)¹³, a commission merchant from Paris, France and E. Gerli & Co. (1886-1912) a leading silk importer from Italy.¹⁴ A fire was also recorded in the building in 1904 while E. Gerli & Co. resided in the building.¹⁵

ESTABLISHED 1794.

ROBERT THORP & SONS,

MANUFACTURERS AND IMPORTERS OF

Galloons, Prussian Bindings,

SILK, ALPACA & MOHAIR BRAIDS.

52 Greene Street, New York.

Warehouses, Manchester and London. Factory, Macclesfield, England

⁴ (Young 2001)

⁵ (Documents of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York 1859b, 25:130)

⁶ (Documents of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York 1859a, 26:112)

⁷ (Sheldon 1882)

⁸ Wilson, H. 1863.

⁹ Wilson, H. 1873

¹⁰ (Laura Wasowicz 2014)

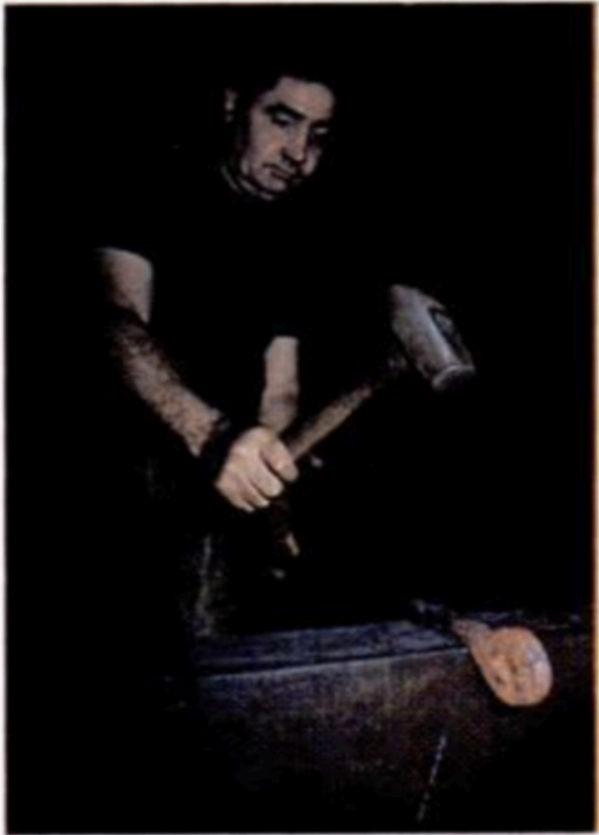
¹¹ The British Trade Journal and Export World, 1879, 23.

¹² The British Trade Journal and Export World, 1880, 4.

¹³ Lilienthal v. Drucklieb 1899

¹⁴ Trow's (Formerly Wilson's) Business Directory of the Boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx, City of New York 1898, 998

¹⁵ Annual Report of the Committee on Fire Patrol, to the New York Board of Fire Underwriters 1904, 220



Village smithy: *Electric-arc welding has made ornamental ironwork neat and quick, but Joseph Lavelli still occasionally dons the blacksmith's leather apron to work at the forge of Particular Iron Works, at 52 Greene Street, founded by father Peter in 1914. Public-school fences used to be Lavelli's mainstay; today it's private commissions—gates, fire escapes, the occasional iron sculpture.*

By 1920 the ownership of the building changed and in 1927 the building was acquired by the Lavelli family together with business partners. During the financial crisis of the 1930s, the Lavellis took full ownership of the property and bought out the other partners, who had fallen into incredible financial troubles from the economic depression. Peter Lavelli, who founded his company in 1914, set up an iron workshop “Particular Iron Works” on the ground floor, and began renting out the upper floors.

From the Iron Workshops in 52 Greene, the Lavelli's first worked primarily for the New York City board of education. Later they began to extend their scope, doing private commissions in the neighborhood, including for the artist that had moved into the often vacant buildings. An article from March 1979 in the New York Magazine features Joseph Lavelli, working at his forge in the building.

According to Joe Lavelli, in the late 1950's, a paintbrush factory on the fifth floor caught fire overnight and caused the top two floors to collapse. At the time, due to a lack of funds, they were not rebuilt, but the building was repaired and modernized. A new roof and fireproof iron staircase were built and a sprinkler system was installed by Buckmiller Sprinkler Co, who still operate from Broome Street.

A notable tenant that used the second floor was the Painting Center, a gallery that started out in the building in 1993 until they relocated to Chelsea in 2010. Today the first floor is used by Gandia Blasco, a leading outdoor furniture brand from Spain. They modernized the first floor, basement, and storefront over the years, painting the lower facade bright white, which now distinguishes the building.

Since its reconstruction in the late 50s, beside the first floor, few changes have been made to the building. However, there are few original elements remaining in the building dating back to the 19th century, such as the cast iron elements of the storefront and the brick facade.



5 **EXISTING STOREFRONT**
52 GREENE STREET

Restoration of the building closer to its original 19th century form is now planned in close cooperation with New York City's Landmark Conservation Commission. The top two floors that were destroyed in the fire will be reconstructed and a setback penthouse with a green roof and terraces will be added. The front and rear facade will be renovated with new windows, matching brick and an extended fire escape. It also is planned to renovate the cast iron storefront and add missing parts, such as the lost Corinthian leaves and cornices as well as restoring the bullet glass sidewalk vault. The building will be equipped with an ADA compliant elevator and new efficient mechanical systems to meet modern standards and code requirements.



GAIN

52 GREENE

COMMERCIAL OFFICE SPACE FOR LEASE

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