

**VAN TASSELL & KEARNEY AUCTION MART, 126-128 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1903-4; Jardine, Kent & Jardine, architects**

Landmark Site: Block 558, Lot 43, in part, consisting of the property on which the 1903-04 structure is located

On September 7, 2006 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Van Tassell & Kearney Auction Mart and the proposed designation of the related Landmark site. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with provisions of law. Twenty-four people spoke in support of designation, including Council member Rosie Mendez and representatives of Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, State Senator Tom Duane, State Assembly member Deborah Glick, the Union Square Community Coalition, the Municipal Art Society, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the Society for the Architecture of the City, the Historic Districts Council, Landmark West! and the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

Summary

The former Van Tassell & Kearney auction mart is a three-story Beaux-Arts style building on the south side of East 13<sup>th</sup> Street, between Third and Fourth Avenues. Built in 1903-04, the handsome structure is one of the last remaining buildings in New York City that was erected for staging horse auctions. Designed by the New York architects Jardine, Kent & Jardine, the fifty-foot-wide red brick facade terminates in a rounded cornice, echoing the shape of the central window. Enlivened by four bull's eye windows and limestone trim, the apex frames a projecting limestone element that originally supported a flagpole. Edward W. Kearney, son of the firm's founder, commissioned this elegant building to attract the type of wealthy clientele that purchased horses for competition and leisure. Weekly auctions took place in the "commodious sales ring," a shed-like space with mezzanine. Van Tassell & Kearney were active on East 13<sup>th</sup> Street for more than fifty years. Originally general auctioneers, after 1904 "high class" show horses and ponies dominated sales. Many prominent citizens did business with Van Tassell & Kearney, including the estate of United States senator Roscoe Conkling and members of the Vanderbilt family. By the 1920s, the firm was mainly involved in automobile sales and the building would be leased to a candy manufacturer, and later, the Delehanty Institute, a vocational school that trained women for the defense industry during the Second World War. In 1978, the structure was acquired by the painter, printmaker and sculptor Frank Stella, who used it as his studio until 2005. Significant in terms of architectural design and specialized purpose, the former Van Tassell & Kearney auction mart recalls the era when New York City was a leading auction center and horse sales were a common activity.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Horses in New York City

A century ago, the streets of American cities were crowded with horses. Mainly used for transportation, these animals pulled private carriages, stage coaches, and streetcars. To accommodate the estimated 75,000 horses in New York City, about 4,500 stables were built.<sup>1</sup> Wealthy families commissioned their own distinctive structures where horses, carriages, and attendants (grooms and coachmen) were quartered. Typically located away from residential streets, picturesque rows are still found along McDougal Alley, West 18<sup>th</sup> Street, East 69<sup>th</sup> and East 73<sup>rd</sup> Streets in Manhattan, as well as on Grace Court Alley and Hunt's Lane in Brooklyn Heights and Verandah Place in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn (most of these 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings are designated New York City Landmarks or are located in historic districts). For commercial purposes, larger structures were built, such as the Claremont Stables (1892, a designated New York City Landmark) at 175 West 89<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, where one could board or lease a horse-drawn carriage, or peddler stables that served delivery firms and small businesses. Stables were also maintained by the municipal police and fire-fighting forces, as well as by private riding academies near Central and Prospect Parks. The introduction of elevated trains during the 1880s, followed by automobiles at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, changed the relationship between the horse and daily life. During this period, stables were converted to garages or residences and horses were increasingly bred for beauty and speed. These high-priced animals were primarily used for sport and leisure.

Horse racing has been a popular activity in the metropolitan area since colonial times. Early contests took place along the Bowery and Third Avenue, as well as on tracks outside the city. In 1865, the American Jockey Club was formed by August Belmont, Leonard Jerome, and William Travers. This prestigious association built Jerome Park (1866, demolished) in the Fordham section of the Bronx where such major events as the Belmont Stakes, today the final race in the Triple Crown, were held until 1889. A lavish facility, it contained an eight thousand-seat grandstand and an Italianate-style clubhouse, with a large dining room and ballroom.<sup>2</sup> Though Belmont maintained that "racing [was] for the rich,"<sup>3</sup> the sport gained wide popularity and many local tracks were constructed: Aqueduct Racetrack (1894, rebuilt 1959) in Queens; Empire City Racetrack (1900-50, demolished) in Yonkers; Jamaica Racetrack (1903-56, demolished) in Queens; and Belmont Park (1905, rebuilt 1968) in Nassau County, which replaced Morris Park, the short-lived successor to Jerome Park. Also of note was the Harlem Speedway. Located beside the Harlem River, north of 155<sup>th</sup> Street, this offshoot of old Harlem Lane (now St. Nicholas Avenue) was used as a racecourse from 1898 to 1915.<sup>4</sup>

### Van Tassell & Kearney

Van Tassell & Kearney were "auctioneers and commission merchants."<sup>5</sup> William Van Tassell (1841-88) entered the business first. Widely respected by his peers, the *New York Daily Tribune* claimed he "never did a dishonest thing in his life, and raised the trade to a responsible calling."<sup>6</sup> Born in Manhattan, during his early career he worked for the White Stage Line, supervising daily coaches between New York and Albany, and later, the Broadway and Seventh Avenue car lines.<sup>7</sup> Around 1867 he became partners with the auctioneer Archibald Johnston, and the firm was known as Johnston & Tassell. They organized all types of sales, from bronzes and carpets, to horses and real estate. The main office and salesroom was located at 37 Nassau Street, with a carriage repository at 8 Cortlandt Street, and a "horse auction branch" at 112-14 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street. When the firm disbanded in early 1873, Johnson appears to have retained both facilities.<sup>8</sup>

Van Tassell & Edward Kearney (1830-1900) formed their partnership in 1873 or 1874. Also born in Manhattan, Kearney worked for many years as a butcher and served as a soldier in the Eighth New York Infantry during the Civil War.<sup>9</sup> A member of Tammany Hall, he had social and political ties to the Democratic Party. Kearney, who supplied meat to city institutions, “accumulated a large fortune” which he invested in real estate and the auction business. Though some accounts report that he was the principal member in Van Tassell & Kearney, articles also describe his son, Edward W(allace) Kearney (c. 1860-1918), as partner. The elder Kearney was a member of the Manhattan Club, as well as the New York Athletic Club, the Coney Island Jockey Club, and the Riding and Driving Clubs. He summered in Saratoga where he was active in the Saratoga Racing Association. As the organization’s president, he funded various prize races, including the Kearney Stakes and the Van Tassell & Kearney Stakes.

Van Tassell & Kearney had facilities on East 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets. These blocks were in the vicinity of the Union Square entertainment district and close to the Third Avenue elevated railway. In addition, the area was near Van Tassell’s home at 28 Irving Place, as well as within walking distance of many prestigious private clubs. Initially, the offices and salesrooms were located in a brick building at 110-12 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1888, Van Tassell & Kearney commissioned a through-block five-story structure at 130-32 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street and 125-29 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street (Jardine & Jardine). Faced with cast iron, red brick and terra-cotta, sections of the street elevations were embellished with horse-related ornament, mainly images of spurs, shoes and whips.<sup>10</sup> In 1890, a small annex was constructed at 123 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, adjoining 125-29 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>11</sup> The rear of this annex was subsequently altered to create access to the subsequent auction mart structure at 126-28 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The company also owned buildings at 124 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street, 129 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street, and either 127 or 131 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street.

### Auctions and the Carriage Trade

Auctions have a lengthy history, dating back to ancient Babylonia. The American auction system has its roots in eighteenth-century England, during the period when Sotheby’s and Christie’s were established in London. The industrial revolution brought dramatic change to the business. Not only did the number of auction houses multiply, but railroads made it possible for sales of goods and livestock to take place in central, mainly urban, locations. This was especially true after the Civil War, the period when New York City became an important auction center.

In Manhattan, several firms specialized in horse auctions. Significantly larger than conventional auction houses, these purpose-built structures were generally designed with a central hall where horses could be temporarily quartered, exhibited, and sold. On Broadway, at the corner of West 50<sup>th</sup> Street, was the prestigious American Horse Exchange (1881-85, mostly demolished in 1910 and incorporated into the Winter Garden Theater, a designated New York City Interior Landmark).<sup>12</sup> Financed by Jockey Club founder William K. Vanderbilt, auctions took place in a triple-height space, ringed by balconies and clerestory windows. A writer in *Harper’s Weekly* observed: “The sale of blooded stock in New York is a transaction carried out under entirely different circumstances than the sale of ordinary work horses . . . You may see the well-made-up club lounge who runs his horses elbow to elbow with the badly dressed horsey man of doubtful antecedents.”<sup>13</sup> Further uptown, at Seventh Avenue and 50<sup>th</sup> Street, stood Tattersall’s (demolished), a branch of the London auction house. *King’s Handbook of New York* described it as “one of the most perfect ever devised for the purpose.” A multi-sided structure with a corner entrance pavilion, the circular interior had skylights and balconies on all sides. Numerous horses were traded here and the *New York*

*Herald* reported that the “attractive interior, easy seats and a well-conducted café make it a pleasant place visit even [if] one does not intend to buy.”<sup>14</sup>

Van Tassell & Kearney’s East 13<sup>th</sup> Street complex was described in 1888 as “the largest mart in the city for the sale of horses, carriages, real estate, and household effects of all kinds at auction, and does all this class of business for city departments.”<sup>15</sup> Carriages were an important part of the business, with an average of twelve to fifteen thousand sold each year, including new and second-hand four-seat broughams, two-seat victorias, and two-wheeled cabriolets. While the firm was described in the *New York Times* as the “place of places to pick up bargains in horses suited to general work,”<sup>16</sup> beginning in the 1890s it became increasingly involved in the sale of carriage horses and show horses, including property owned by Brooklyn railroad owner Andrew R. Culver, Virginia tobacco farmer David Dunlop, breeder John Gerken, and members of the Vanderbilt family.

### Design and Construction

Built during 1903 and 1904, the East 13<sup>th</sup> Street building was planned as “an auction mart for horses and carriages.”<sup>17</sup> The elder Kearney died in 1900 and the structure was conceived by his son, Edward W. Kearney, who sought to reposition the firm as a destination for purchasing expensive horses and vehicles. Initially, despite the introduction of the automobile, prospects seemed good. *The Rider and Driver*, a weekly journal devoted to horse racing, riding and related activities, reported in 1901-02 that “prominent and discriminating people” attended sales at Van Tassell & Kearney and that the New York market was the “greatest for high class carriage horses in the country.”<sup>18</sup>

Few auction marts, or even auction houses for that matter, were housed in buildings of architectural distinction before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. True in both Europe and North America, the French writer Octave Uzanne bemoaned this tendency in the pages of *Connoisseur* magazine in 1902, writing that the ideal auction house should be “a monument on noble lines and of immense proportions . . . open to light and air, well-arranged, easy to clean, with facilities of access and ample installation, it should be both elegant and comfortable.”<sup>19</sup> Kearney certainly would have agreed, commissioning an impressive building that would stand out from its humble neighbors to attract the type of elite clientele that was looking to buy and sell horses for leisure and competition.

Permits were filed with the Department of Buildings in April 1903. The estimated cost of construction was \$16,000. Measuring approximately 50 by 103 feet, the new building replaced three row houses and was faced with brick, limestone, and granite.<sup>20</sup> The interior consisted of a single room, with an 8 by 12 foot gallery suspended by rods from roof trusses. The peak roof, hidden behind the curved cornice, incorporated 1,350 square feet of skylights. Planned as an annex to the 1888 building, it shared a party wall and was connected to 123 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street by a ground-story passage. Work on the structure was completed in the second half of 1904 and by the end of the year advertisements described the “new and commodious sales ring, with many conveniences for the proper display of horses and carriages, and comfortable seats for spectators.”<sup>21</sup> Each Tuesday and Friday, Van Tassell & Kearney held auctions in the new building. Though carriages remained an important part of the business, most advertisements and newspaper stories concerned the sale of horses, particularly high-priced ribbon winners, polo ponies, hunters, and thoroughbreds. Other sales were devoted to breeding stock and coach horses, including a large group of horses co-owned by Alfred W. Vanderbilt and Robert L. Gerry in 1906.

Jardine, Kent & Jardine’s symmetrical and well-proportioned Beaux-Arts style design displays a clear awareness of current architectural fashions in Paris and New York City. The central arched window is set within a wide coved band that widens and becomes

more three-dimensional near the top. Crowned by a prominent cartouche and keystone, this feature may have been influenced by the dramatic forms associated with the Art Nouveau style, or perhaps, the padded oval collars worn by horses. Arches were widely used in neo-Classical style architecture at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the main facade of Grand Central Terminal and the New York Public Library (both are designated New York City Landmarks), but relatively few examples emphasize a single, monumental opening. In this instance, the architect's solution may have been inspired by the dramatic glazed entrance of the Petit Palais (Charles Giroudet, 1900), constructed for Universal Exposition in Paris, or by such local works as Ernest Flagg and Walter B. Chambers' Fire Engine Company 33 (1898-99, a designated New York City Landmark), at 44 Great Jones Street in NoHo, in which a triple-height arch of brick and limestone crowns a pair of apparatus bays, and Fire Engine Company 67 (1897-98, a designated New York City Landmark) at 514 West 170<sup>th</sup> Street in Washington Heights. Flagg and Chambers, like many of their contemporaries, studied at the Ecole-des-Beaux-Arts in Paris. They frequently employed this type of window in their work, using it to illuminate interiors and create compositional focus.<sup>22</sup>

The owner and architects may have also found inspiration in recently-constructed stables. Frank J. Gould, for example, commissioned a private riding ring and stable at 219 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street (1901, demolished).<sup>23</sup> Designed by York & Sawyer, this temple-like structure was distinguished by a prominent round-arched window set above twin doors. The large opening brought light into a triple-height interior that featured a ring to train and exercise horses. They may also have admired the French Renaissance-style stable and studio recently built for C. Ledyward Blair (1901, part of the Upper East Side Historic District). Designed by Trowbridge & Livingston, the third story incorporated an elaborate recessed arch that framed a large window and balcony. This multi-layered feature pushes up into the steeply-pitched mansard, and, like the window of the Van Tassell & Kearney auction mart on 13<sup>th</sup> Street, is flanked by bull's eye openings.

### The Architects

Jardine, Kent & Jardine was the prominent successor firm to Jardine & Jardine, also called D. & J. Jardine.<sup>24</sup> Established by David Jardine (1830-1892) and John Jardine (1838-1920) in 1865, the brothers enjoyed a thriving practice in New York City for several decades, designing a great variety of commercial structures. Major surviving works by the firm include: a cast-iron commercial building at 319 Broadway (1869-70, a designated New York City Landmark), the B. Altman & Co. Dry Goods Store (1876-80, part of the Ladies Mile Historic District) on Sixth Avenue, and the Wilbraham (1880-90, a designated New York City Landmark), a bachelor apartment hotel at the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 30<sup>th</sup> Street. It is also worth noting that the firm had significant experience with horse-related structures, including the American Horse Exchange (1883-1910, mostly demolished) at Broadway and 50<sup>th</sup> Street, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Railroad Stables (1886, demolished), and the Bradbury Livery Stables (1892, demolished) on West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

William Winthrop Kent (1860-1955) joined the firm following David Jardine's death in 1892 and it became known as Jardine, Kent & Jardine. After graduating from Harvard College in 1882 he worked with H. H. Richardson, supervising construction of the Henry Adams residence (1884) in Washington, D. C. By 1888, he was active in New York City, collaborating with his brother, the architect Edward Austin Kent, and Heins & LaFarge. As a member of Jardine, Kent and Jardine, William Winthrop Kent worked with John Jardine and George Elliot Jardine, who joined his brothers around 1887. George passed away in 1902, leaving John Jardine and Kent as senior partners. In 1903 alone, the year that the auction mart was commissioned, the firm designed a loft building at 14 Christopher Street (part of the

Greenwich Village Historic District), a stable alteration at 36 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished), a six-story tenement at the corner of Amsterdam Avenue and 107<sup>th</sup> Street, and a hospital pavilion for the New York Infant Asylum.

At the time of Kent's death in 1955, several neo-classical structures were attributed to him, suggesting that he may have been the partner in charge of the Van Tassell & Kearney project. In his obituary, he was described as the architect of government buildings in Bronxville, New York, as well as two Carnegie libraries, and "many country houses in the metropolitan area."<sup>25</sup> He may have also designed the C. S. Redfield residence in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, and Burklyn Hall, a neo-Georgian-style house in East Burke, Vermont, built for E.A. Darling in 1908-10. In subsequent years, the practice was renamed Jardine, Kent & Hill (1911-13), and later, Jardine, Hill and Murdock (1913-36).

### Later history

In New York City, horse auctions began to significantly decline around 1910. Not only was the popular Ford Model T introduced in 1908, making the automobile available to the wider public, but from 1910 to 1913 horse racing was temporarily outlawed in New York State. During this period, the American Horse Exchange closed and fewer sales took place at Van Tassell & Kearney. One of the last horse auctions to occur at the 13<sup>th</sup> Street auction mart took place in 1916. Consisting of property owned by Sir Adam Beck of Ontario and A. J. A. Devereux of Philadelphia, the nine horses sold for as much as \$3,600. each.<sup>26</sup> Such activity was fondly recalled in 1928 when Betty Shannon wrote in the *New York Times*: "The great market for horseflesh was Van Tassell & Kearney's "Auction Rooms and Carriage Repository" at 128 East Thirteenth Street. This was the place where the Belmonts and Vanderbilts and other families transacted their horse affairs."<sup>27</sup>

Following Edward W. Kearney's death in 1918, an "unprecedented" multi-day sale was held at the complex to disperse hundreds of new and second-hand carriages. In subsequent advertisements, automobiles became the main focus. Van Tassell & Kearney were now described as a "long-esteemed clearing house for the sale and purchase of second-hand automobiles: least troublesome and quickest medium for both seller and buyer."<sup>28</sup> The firm remained active as late as 1925, but the building (or part of it) was used by a candy manufacturer. The structure was then leased to M. J. Delehanty of the Delehanty Institute of Civil Service, which ran several vocational schools in New York City. To accommodate the program, significant alterations were made to the interiors in the late 1930s. At this location, during the Second World War, women were taught "assembly and inspection work, the reading of blueprints, and various mechanical aspects needed in defense industries."<sup>29</sup>

From the late 1978 to 2005, the building was owned by the painter, print-maker and sculptor Frank Stella (b. 1936).<sup>30</sup> Major surveys of the artist's work were presented at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970 and 1987. While his early paintings were abstract and minimal, since the 1970s Stella has experimented with large "shaped" canvases and three-dimensional constructions. After acquiring the building, he had the facade cleaned and restored. Paint was removed from the ground story and new gates were installed. The alterations were supervised by Earl Childress and completed by 1981. In subsequent years, Childress became a member of Stella's studio and worked with the artist on both sculptures and architectural projects.<sup>31</sup> The building is currently occupied by the Peridance Capezio Dance Center.

### Description

The former Van Tassell & Kearney auction mart is located on the south side of East 13<sup>th</sup> Street, between Third and Fourth Avenues, in the East Village section of Manhattan.

Fifty feet wide, the building is approximately three stories tall. The north facade is red brick and limestone; the rear (south) facade is not visible from the street.

**Historic:** limestone quoins frame the center arched window and extend up the east and west edges of facade; projecting limestone label moldings divide the facade into three horizontal sections; the base of the first story is pink granite; oval bull's eye windows on first story have brick voussoirs; the arched window above the entrance rises to a coved arch; rectangular side windows are one over one, with a single fixed pane above; the top of the arch curves down and merges with the horizontal molding that extends to east and west edge of the facade; a molding rests atop the two-dimensional limestone quoins that run up the sides of the facade; the main arch incorporates an elaborate cartouche with an interconnected keystone; circular bulls' eye windows incorporate four keystones; each window is divided into four triangular panes; at the apex the curved cornice squares off and flanks a projecting element that originally supported a flagpole.

**Alterations:** metal girder (installed by 1939); flagpole removed, in-kind replacement of pocket doors and window frames, painted green; rectangular windows with non-historic vertical metal bars; bottom of the east window gate has been designed to accommodate air conditioning unit; top of west window has air conditioning unit; address numbers (128) attached on either side of the entrance quoins, graffiti on doors and base.

Researched and written by  
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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This section is based on "The Carriage Era in New York," a brochure that accompanied the 1999 exhibition organized by the Museums at Stony Brook and sponsored by the Paine Webber Group, Inc. in New York City. Also see "Horse-drawn vehicles," "Horses," and "Stables," Kenneth Jackson, ed.; *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 557-59, 1108; Christopher Gray, "Not On Our Block: New York's Private Stable Story," *Avenue* (April 1986), 96-103; Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes: Readers' Questions: An Elaborate Stable," *New York Times*, April 6, 1908, last viewed at [nytimes.org](http://nytimes.org); and "New York's Equestrian Past," last viewed at [www.forgotten-ny.com](http://www.forgotten-ny.com).

<sup>2</sup> Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 954.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; 954.

<sup>4</sup> "Harlem Lane Playground," last viewed at [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org).

<sup>5</sup> *Illustrated New York: The Metropolis of To-day* (1888), 162, last viewed at [Books/Google.com](http://Books/Google.com)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> "Mr. Van Tassell Killed," *New York Daily Tribune*, December 8, 1888, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Advertisements for Johnston & Van Tassell were found in the *New York Times*, August 18, 1870; December 13, 1872, February 18, 1873, 3; *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 16, 1869, 1.

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<sup>9</sup> “Edward Kearney Dead,” *New York Times*, February 26, 1900, 7; Obituary, *New York Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1900, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Shortly after the “new stables” were completed, Van Tassell fell into the elevator shaft and died. “Funeral of William Van Tassell,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1888, 8.

<sup>11</sup> 123 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street is not part of the landmark site.

<sup>12</sup> The Winter Garden was rebuilt in 1896, incorporating a stable, riding auditorium, and auction ring. See *Winter Garden Theater, First Floor Interior, Designation Report* (LP-1387)(City of New York, 1988) prepared by various authors, 17.

<sup>13</sup> From *Harper’s Weekly* (January 12, 1889), cited by Robert A. Doyle in “The American Horse Exchange” last viewed at [www.nyauctioneers.org/news](http://www.nyauctioneers.org/news).

<sup>14</sup> “Tattersalls (of New York) Limited,” *King’s Handbook of New York City*, (Boston, Massachusetts, Second edition, 1893) 812-23. The Fiss, Doerr & Carroll Auction Mart (Horgan & Slattery, 1906, demolished), a monumental vaulted structure on East 24<sup>th</sup> Street, was probably the last horse auction mart built in New York City. Like the Van Tassell & Kearney complex, it consisted of a seven-story sales stable that was connected to a vaulted auction mart where the horses were exhibited. See “Revolutionary Ideas in Stable Architecture,” in *Architects’ and Builders’ Magazine* (December 1906), 115, and Christopher Gray, “Streetscapes: Fiss, Doerr & Carroll Auction Mart: Who Holds the Reins on Fate of a 1907 Horse-Auction Mart?,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1987, A14.

<sup>15</sup> *Illustrated New York: The Metropolis of To-day*.

<sup>16</sup> “Horse and Carriage Trade,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1894, 3.

<sup>17</sup> “Application for Erection of Brick Buildings,” Office of the President of the Borough of Manhattan, Plan No. 323 (1903).

<sup>18</sup> *The Rider and Driver*, (May 25, 1901), 16; (April 19, 1902), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Brian Learmount, *The History of the Auction* (Barnard & Learmount, 1985), 77.

<sup>20</sup> For an advertisement featuring an image of the 1888 building and two of the adjoining row houses, see *The Rider and Driver* (October 19, 1895), 20.

<sup>21</sup> Advertisement, *Wall Street Journal*, December 9, 1904, 8.

<sup>22</sup> See Mardges Bacon, *Ernest Flag: Beaux-Arts Architect and Reformer* (The Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1986).

<sup>23</sup> Gould’s stable was located next to the American Fine Arts Society Building, built 1891-92. For information, see: *The Rider and Driver*, April 6, 1901.

<sup>24</sup> This section on the architects is based on the *Wilbraham Designation Report* (LP-2153)(City of New York, 2004), prepared by Jay Shockley, 3-4.

<sup>25</sup> “William W. Kent, Architect, Was 75,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1955, 29.

<sup>26</sup> “A Hunter Brings \$3,600,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1916, 13.

<sup>27</sup> “Where Carriages Still Rule,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1929, 88.

<sup>28</sup> “Automobile Exchange,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1918. RE11.

<sup>29</sup> “Delehanty to Teach Women,” *New York Times*, December 28, 1941. D6; “M. J. Delehanty Headed Institute,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1964, 29.

<sup>30</sup> See “Frank Stella cashes out of EV for 10m,” last viewed at [felixsalmon.com](http://felixsalmon.com) (March 23, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Sidney Guberman, *Frank Stella: An Illustrated Biography* (Rizzoli International, 1995), 214.



## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the former Van Tassell & Kearney Auction Mart has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, history, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that the former Van Tassell & Kearney Auction Mart was constructed in 1903-04; that it is a handsome Beaux-Arts-style building and one of the last remaining structures in New York City built to hold horse auctions; that it was designed by the New York architects Jardine, Kent & Jardine; that the fifty-foot-wide red brick facade features prominent classical details and a rounded cornice, echoing the shape of the center window; that this large arched window is set within a wide coved band that the crowns the entrance; that the facade is enlivened by four bull's eye windows and limestone trim; that Edward W. Kearney, son of the firm's founder, commissioned it to attract a wealthy clientele that was looking to purchase horses for competition and leisure; that weekly auctions took place in a "commodious sales ring," a shed-like interior that was advertised as having "comfortable seats" and electric lighting; that Van Tassell & Kearney began as general auctioneers and were active on East 13<sup>th</sup> Street for more than fifty years; that after 1904 "high class" show horses and ponies dominated sales; that many prominent Americans did business here, including the estate of United States senator Roscoe Conkling and members of the Vanderbilt family; that by the 1920s the firm was mainly involved in automobile sales and the building was later leased to a candy factory and the Delehanty Institute, a vocational school that trained women in the defense industry during the Second World War; that in 1978 it was acquired by the artist Frank Stella who used it as his studio until 2005; and that this well-preserved building recalls the era when New York City was an important auction center and horse sales were a common activity.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Van Tassell & Kearney Auction Mart, 126-28 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 558, Lot 43, in part, consisting of the property on which the 1903-04 structure is located, as its Landmark Site.

Commissioners:

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

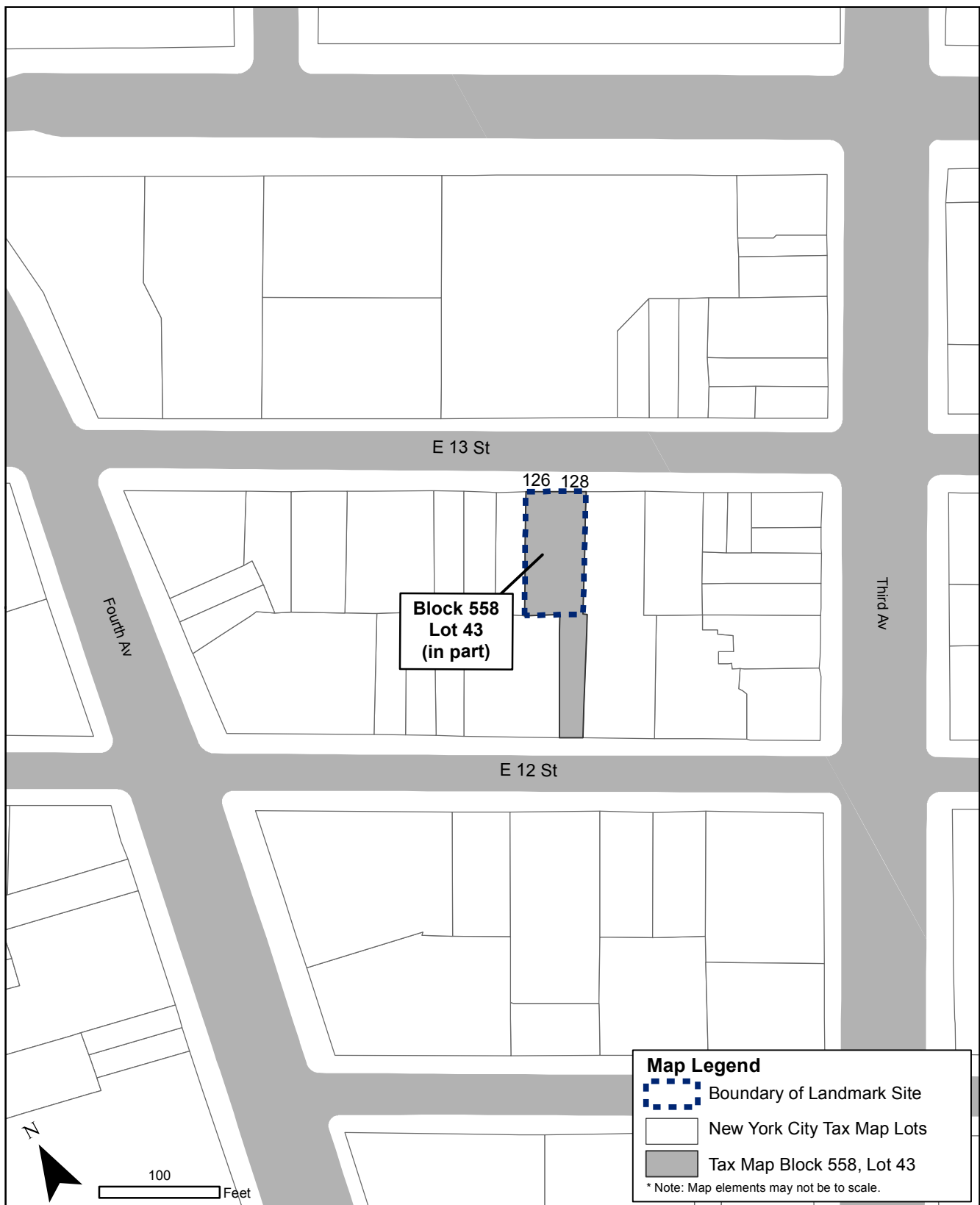
Pablo Vengoechera, Vice Chair

Michael Devonshire, Christopher Moore,

Margery Perlmutter, Libby Ryan, Roberta Washington



**Van Tassell & Kearney Auction Mart**  
126-128 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Borough of Manhattan.  
Landmark Site: Block 558, Lot 43, in part, consisting of the property  
on which the 1903-04 structure is located.  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2012*



VAN TASSELL & KEARNEY AUCTION MART (LP-2205), 126-128 East 13th Street. Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 558, Lot 43, in part, consisting of the property on which the 1903-04 structure is located.

Designated: May 15, 2012