Sally Ann and the Flag Factory

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As an appraiser of antique flags, I am often asked about the early flag makers and their story. We are today somewhat familiar with Annin & Company as the oldest flag maker still in existence in the United States, but there were many others in the early days in many cities of this country. What follows is my research into perhaps the earliest New York City flag-making dynasty, which was said to have made flags from 1834 to about 1920. Understanding who these early flag makers were, their practices and techniques, including specific designs that can be attributed to them individually, is an important method into gaining an understanding of the technology of early flags.

The story of Sarah “Sally Ann” McFadden, sometimes referred to as “New York’s Betsy Ross” is a story of a complicated family and the paucity of good records. In many cases, the existing records contradict other records. Following is my best attempt to tie everything together as best I can to make sense of the whole story. Please note that some of this, especially the early years, consists of much speculation that may or may not be accurate and is subject to further research and correction.

Sarah Ann McFadden was born in New York City in December 1808, according to the 1900 U.S. Census. Her parents were George McFadden, born in Ireland, and Julia Wilday McFadden, born in Tarrytown, New York. She died at 8 St. Luke’s Place, Manhattan, on 21 August 1904, at age 95. She is buried in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn along with her mother Julia, her brother Robert (more correctly George Robert McFadden), his wife Sarah M. McFadden, her sister Eliza Merritt, her successors in the flag-making business and grand-nephews James W. Harrison, Jr., and Levi Hitchcock Harrison, and their brother Robert E. Harrison, Levi’s wife Jennie, Levi Hitchcock (a close friend of the family), and Sarah Ann’s nephew-in-law Theodore Searle Lent (along with Baby Ruth).
The story reported by newspapers of the day was that Sally Ann McFadden founded the flag-making business at 198 Hudson Street in New York City in 1834. A sign stating that fact was on the house in 1899. Formerly, a large flagpole stood in front of this address associated with the business. In 1894, her grand-nephew under the name of L. Hitch Harrison stated “The pole was erected February 22, 1834.” Further, it is claimed that “General [John] Dix, head of the Trinity Church Corporation, first raised a flag on that pole.” The house at 198 Hudson Street, along with all of the other homes on that block, was owned by the Trinity Church Corporation throughout the nineteenth century. The McFaddens and, later, the Harrisons were renters of at least one, but sometimes both, of the two units at that address.

Early records regarding this family are few and far between. Sarah’s father, George McFadden, is likely the same George McFaden listed in the 1810 US Census for the 5th Ward of New York City. Recorded 4 January 1811, it lists one male between 26 and 45, one female between 26 and 45, and two females less than 10 years old. All of this fits with known data and one of those two females under 10 is likely Sarah Ann. I cannot find any records for him in the 1820 or 1830 Census records.

As stated above, the flag-making business supposedly started in 1834 at 198 Hudson Street. It is likely that the death of George McFadden caused the beginning of that undertaking, not by Sarah alone, but by her mother Julia along with Sarah and perhaps others in the household. The 1840 US Census records a household in the 5th Ward, listed 5 September 1840, as being headed by Julia McFadden and whose members included one male 10–15 years old, two males 15–20, two males 20–30, four females 20–30, two females 30–40, one female 50–60 (Julia, born in 1780 according to her gravestone inscription), and one free colored female 10–24. Three of these were employed in manufacture or trades. I believe this is the flag factory. Julia died in 1847 (see Appendix 1) but was listed in the 1834 Longworth’s City Directory as “McFadden, Julia, widow of George, 178 Hudson.” Hudson Street was renumbered in 1844, so this may be the same address that later became number 198.

The 1850 U.S. Census does not seem to locate any McFadden in the 5th Ward. There is a Sarah McFadden of the correct age living with a head of household named William McFadden who was three years her junior and a bunch of child-aged McFaddens in the 8th Ward, which abuts the 5th Ward so that may be she. All records indicate Sarah Ann never married. Perhaps this is a brother, but I have not found any evidence of that. This record says Sarah could not read or write. Likely it is not Sarah Ann McFadden.
The Harrison family first appears in the 1850 Census in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, N.Y.\(^7\) James W. Harrison is the head of the household, age 33 with Ann Harrison, age 19, and Julia Harrison, age 2. Born in New York, James is listed as a book binder by trade. There are many other James Harrisons in New York at this time but we know this is the correct family because Julia later married Rudolph de Thouars d’Escury, son of the Prince of Tolmont, Duke de Thouars,\(^8\) and her records corroborate the 1850 entry.

In 1860, the Harrisons were in the District of Columbia. Listed on 18 June 1860 in the 4th Ward of the City of Washington were James W. Harrison, 34, male, book binder, with $100 in personal value; Annie Harrison, 29, female; Julia Harrison, 12, female; James Harrison, 9, male; George Harrison, 7, male; Robert Harrison, 4, male; and Levy Harrison, 2 months old, male. All the Harrisons except Levy were listed as being born in New York; Levy was listed as born in the District of Columbia.\(^9\)

Sarah Ann’s brother George Robert McFadden, known by the family as “Robert” to distinguish him from his father, is likely the same George R. McFadden who served in the Mexican War whose widow, Sarah, applied for his pension on 19 May 1851.\(^{10}\)

![Figure 1. Sarah McFadden’s pension application from 1851. Source: United States Old War Pension Index, 1815–1926, familysearch.org (accessed 16 January 2016).](image)

Both Robert and Sarah M. McFadden are buried in Green-Wood Cemetery on the same lot as Sarah Ann. *The Directory of the City of New York* published in 1852 lists “McFadden, Sarah, wid. Geo. flagmaker, 193 Hudson.”\(^{21}\) I suspect...
this is a typo as there is only one other listing for someone at 198 Hudson Street, but there were two units at that address throughout the nineteenth century up until the block was razed in the early twentieth century. Note the reference to being the widow of George, something that seems from the entry to have been a recent occurrence. In 1854, *The New York City Directory* listed “McFadden, Sarah, flagmaking, 198 Hudson.” I submit, there were two New York City flag makers named Sarah McFadden located at 198 Hudson Street at that time.

Sarah M. McFadden died on 5 August 1858. Sarah Ann McFadden now came into sole proprietorship of the flag manufactory at 198 Hudson Street. Sally Ann, as she was often called, was the first to advertise her business. The lead up to the Civil War produced a demand for flags and in 1860 she advertised in the New York *Phoenix* and in early 1861 in the Washington D.C. *National Republican*, and probably in other publications. It was reported that, “At the time of the [Civil] war, Miss McFadden gave away so many flags to the school children that the police asked her to desist because the children blocked up Hudson St. It had been her custom to give away flags to the children on every Fourth of July for a number of years.” The flag “cover” (envelope) we know of bears 34 stars, the correct number for the period 1860 to 1863.

![Image of McFadden flag cover](http://www.sheaff-ephemera.com/list/advertising-covers/sarah-mcfadden-flag-maker.html)


The 1860 U.S. Census lists a robust household in the 5th Ward with Sarah McFadden, flag maker, age 51, as head with a Personal Value of $500. Listed among her household of eight people is the book binder Levi Hitchcock, 40, from Connecticut, and flag maker Julia Field, 40, from New York. Also listed is a servant from Ireland and others who may have been involved with her business, including Samuel Johnson, 45, a painter from England.
Sarah Ann McFadden is reported to have made flags for the Secessionists in the South as well as other flags for both sides. She appears to have done well during the Civil War. After the war, her company thrived and supplied flags for the yachting and steamship industries, among others. Sometime between 1865 and 1867 she stopped being a sole proprietor and became “S. McFadden & Co.”

Figure 4. An 1865 McFadden advertisement offering “Maritime, National, & Fancy” flags. Source: Trow’s Commercial Register of New York City for Year Ending May 1, 1865 (New York, 1864).

Figure 5. A similar 1868 advertisement in the same publication noting the addition of “& Co.” to the business title. Trow’s Commercial Register of New York City for Year Ending May 1, 1868 (New York, 1867).
The question then becomes who was the “Company” with whom Sarah Ann was making flags. I believe the answer is found in the 1870 Censuses. There were two enumerations done for the 1870 Census in New York City. The first enumeration was so highly criticized that the second was called and was specifically ordered to include street addresses, the first time that information was included in a U.S. Census.

The first enumeration for the 5th Ward of New York City was listed on 17 July 1870 and listed Sarah McFadden, age 61, as Head. Her occupation is listed as “Flag Manufacturer” and she had $4,000 in real estate and $500 in personal values. Another household member was Levi Hitchcock, age 61, also listed as “Flag Manufacturer” with a real estate value of $12,000. I believe these two are “S. McFadden & Co.” Also in the household was Eliza Merritt, age 70, Sarah’s sister; Teressa M. Alfaya, age 26, flag maker; and two boys (Sarah’s grand-nephews)—Robert E., age 13, and Levi H. Harrison, age 10, both born in Washington, D.C.; and Bridget Grogan, age 25, born in Ireland, listed as “Domestic.” Interestingly, Sarah Ann and her sister Eliza are listed here as having been born in Ireland, which is an error for both.29

The second enumeration was listed 12 January 1871 and shows the same basic household residing at 198 Hudson Street except Sarah, Eliza, and Teressa are each listed as “Housekeeper” and Levi as “Flag Maker.” No values are listed. Sarah and Eliza are correctly listed as having been born in New York; the “Servant” is listed as Mary Quin, age 30, from Ireland. The ages for both Sarah and Levi are listed as 60 and Teressa is listed as 25, a year younger for each compared with the listing of six months earlier.30

![Image](image-url)

**Figure 6.** Business advertisement from 1875. Source: Forbes Townsend and Arthur Granville, Transatlantic And Coastwise Steamship Funnel Marks, House-flags And Night-signals: Also, American Yachts, With Their Club Flags And Private Signals, to Which Is Added a New Chart Showing the Steam Lanes of Ocean Steamship Across the Atlantic, With the Distances of the Several Courses, And the Lines of Telegraph Cables, 2d annual issue (New York: Pelletreau & Raynor, 1875), 66.
Why the Harrison children were placed with Sarah Ann is unclear. Possibly either James or Annie Harrison, their parents, may have passed away by this time. With a large family, his widow Annie may have needed help taking care of them or James may have been unable to care for them. The youngest of the brood, Catherine, was born in 1869 (see below) so that may pinpoint the moment in time. I am still researching this. What became of either of them I do not know, as there are many with those names in the records but I have not been able to definitively locate either after 1860.

Levi Hitchcock Harrison (also known as Levy H. Harrison and L. Hitch Harrison) enlisted in the U.S. Navy on 29 September 1879 for a three-year term. He was 18½ years old, stood 5 feet 7.5 inches, had grey eyes, brown hair, and a florid complexion. His occupation at the time of enlistment was “Telegrapher.” His “usual place of residence” was Washington, D.C.31

The 1880 U.S. Census listed a large household at 198 Hudson Street in New York City’s 5th Ward on 5 June 1880. Sarah Ann McFadden, 71, female, head of household, single, flag maker; Eliza Merritt, 80, female, sister-in-law [sic], single, flag maker; Levi Hitchcock, 71, male, boarder, flag maker; R. E. Harrison, 24, male, single, boarder, flag maker; J. W. Harrison, 29, male, single, boarder, printer; Kate Harrison, 10, female, single, boarder, student; and Mary Regan, 23, female, single, servant.32

![Figure 7. McFadden advertisement from 1886. Source: Niels Olsen (comp.), The American Yacht List for 1886 (New York: Henry Bessey, 1886), 235.](image)

Robert E. Harrison, brother to James W. and Levi H., is recorded in the Manhattan Death records as having died 18 August 1886 at the age of 29. He was buried in Green-Wood Cemetery two days later. His occupation is listed on the City Death Record as “Decorator.”33 His gravestone says he was 39 years old,34 but the 1860, 1870, and 1880 U.S. Census records all agree he was born between 1856 and 1857, which would make him 29 years old in 1886.
Most of the 1890 U.S. Census’s population schedules were badly damaged by a fire in the Commerce Department Building on 10 January 1921. Many of the surviving records were destroyed in 1934.

Levi Hitchcock, Sarah Ann’s partner in the flag-making business, died on 12 May 1890, at age 87, and was buried in the McFadden family plot in Green-Wood Cemetery. His grave stone is inscribed “Green Be the Turf Above Thee, Friend of My Early Days” and signed simply “A”.

At some point before 1893, Sarah Ann decided to retire and she transferred her business to her grand-nephews, James W. Harrison, Jr., and Levi Hitchcock Harrison, who renamed it The S. McFadden Co. Advertisements for the first time now state “Established 1834 at 198 Hudson Street” (which, as we have seen, did not have that number in 1834).

Figure 8. The business advertisement under new management in 1893. Source: Races for the America’s Cup (New York: New York Tribune Association, 1893), 81.

Sarah Ann appears to have retired to Washington, D.C., spending summers, at least, in Peekskill, New York. I assume she had some Harrison or other relatives in that city, but so far have not been able to determine who exactly. At some point before her death she also purchased a home on LeRoy Street in New York City, just off Hudson Street, several blocks north of the flag factory.

In December 1894, the company headquarters made the news because of a complaint filed against the existence of a tall flagpole located at the curb in front of 198 Hudson Street. L. Hitch Harrison (as he was then known), one of the partners, had been heavily involved in local politics which in the period prior to this was Tammany Hall. In 1894 he was involved with a rebellion against the Tammany bosses and they, in turn, filed the complaint about the flagpole.

The complaint was heard in court before Judge Wauhope Lyn on 11 December 1894 and dismissed with the judge’s statement “I think I will let...
Old Glory wave.” On 26 February 1895 the New York City Board of Aldermen passed a resolution “That permission be and the same is hereby given to L. Hitch Harrison to place and keep a flag-pole and an American flag thereon in front of his premises, No. 198 Hudson Street, to be retained at his own expense, under the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works; such permission to continue only during the pleasure of the Common Council.” The flagpole met its demise shortly after this incident, having been blown down and dragged away by a trolley car entangled in the rigging.

On 16 June 1898, the home of Miss Sarah McFadden at 1307 Main Street, Peekskill, New York, was the site of a wedding between Miss Catherine Elizabeth Harrison, her niece, of Washington D.C., and Mr. Theodore Searle Lent of New York, formerly of Shrub Oak. Among others in the wedding party was L. Hitch Harrison, usher, and “the bride was given away by her brother Mr. James W. Harrison of New York.” The couple planned to reside in Peekskill after their honeymoon to the St. Lawrence and the Thousand Islands. There is no doubt that Catherine is the same person as Kate Harrison who was listed in Sarah Ann’s household at 198 Hudson Street in the 1880 Census.

The 1900 U.S. Census for Peekskill, N.Y., listed the family at 1307 Main Street as Sarah A. McFadden, head of household, female, age 91, born December 1808 in New York, single, a renter, and a capitalist by occupation; Catherine E. Lent, adopted, female, age 30, born October 1869 in D.C., married 1 year; Theodore S. Lent, nephew, male, age 28, born December 1871 in New York, married 1 year, book keeper; along with a 73 year old female “friend” and a servant.

The same Census for the 5th Ward of New York City listed the family at 198 Hudson Street as James Wyn [sic] Harrison, head, male, age 49, born October 1850 in N.Y., single, a renter, flag manufacturer; Levy H. Harrison, brother, male, age 40, born March 1860 in D.C., married 12 years with 2 children living, dock master; Jennie Harrison, wife, female, age 32, born December 1867 in New Jersey, married 12 years with 2 children living; Levy H. Harrison, son, male, age 12, born December 1887 in N.Y., single, student; and Julia L. Harrison, daughter, female, age 9, born January 1891 in N.Y., single, student. There were literally hundreds of persons in New York City at this time with the occupation of “dock master,” whose duties were to arrange dock space for boats and ships at the numerous municipal docks, paid for by the fees collected from the vessels. These positions were a type of patronage position granted as a political favor.
The year 1904 was pivotal for the firm. Sarah Ann McFadden passed away on 21 August at 8 St. Luke’s Place, New York City,\textsuperscript{50} and was buried in Green-Wood Cemetery. A few weeks earlier, on 6 August, she had gifted the title to that property to her “adopted” daughter Catherine Harrison Lent.\textsuperscript{51} Catherine also suffered another loss, as her husband, Theodore Searle Lent, passed away in April of that year. He is buried in Green-Wood Cemetery in the McFadden lot. His gravestone is also inscribed “Baby Ruth,” a “child of C. E. Harrison” who died in April 1902. Catherine Lent is listed in the 1920, 1930, and 1940 U.S. Censuses for Washington, D.C., as the owner of a home at 1117 East Capitol St. SE.\textsuperscript{52} In the latter two listings, her brother Frank Harrison, a “meta-physician” with his own practice (even though he only had an eighth-grade education) also lived with her.

New York State conducted a census completed on 1 June 1905. Listed at 198 Hudson Street was Levy H. Harrison, husband, male, age 43, dock master, class w (worker); Jennie Harrison, wife, female, age 35; Loyd H. Harrison, son, male, age 17, electrician, class w; Lillian Harrison, daughter, female, age 14, student; Catherine Stevens, aunt, female, age 49, houseworker; and James W. Harrison, brother, male, age 54, flag manufacturer, class O.a. (persons who conducted their own business).

The 25 April 1910 Census had pretty much the same household at 198 Hudson Street except it listed them as two different families. Levi H. Harrison, head, male, age 50, married 24 years with two living children, renter, born in Virginia, Superintendent of Wharfs; Jennie Harrison, wife, female, age 40, married 24 years with two living children, born in N.J.; Lillian Harrison, daughter, female, age 18, single, born in N.Y., High School student; Kate Stevens, boarder, female, age 50, single, “no language”; Anna Doyle, servant, female, age 24, single, born in Pennsylvania, cook. The second household at that address consisted solely of James Harrison, head, male, age 59, single, renter, born in Virginia, professional flag maker and employer.\textsuperscript{53} Levi had now made it. The Superintendent of Wharfs was a municipal position with a regular salary, and he held this job until his death in 1930. Note that now his family has a servant. In 1914, James was referred to as “Uncle Jimmy” Harrison.\textsuperscript{54}

The 1920 Census listed on 10 January 1920 shows only James W. Harrison, renter, male, age 69, single, manufacturer, flag maker, employer at 198 Hudson Street.\textsuperscript{55} Listed 22 January 1920 was the family at 8 St. Luke’s Place: Hitch L. Harrison, head, renter, male, age 60, born D.C., Superintendent of Wharfs; Jennie Harrison, wife, female, age 49, born N.J.; Walter Ellison, son-in-law, male, age 30, born Mississippi, stevedore; Lillian G. Ellison, daughter, female,
Sally Ann and the Flag Factory

age 27, born N.Y.; Kate Stevens, aunt-in-law, female, age 60, born Piermont, N.Y.; and Hilda McLain, maid, female, age 37, born Texas (parents born in the West Indies), servant.56

Figure 9. The company advertisement as of November 1920. Source: The Marine Journal, 13 November 1920, 36.

James William Harrison, Jr., died on 6 December 1920 at age 70 in Washington, D.C., and was buried in the McFadden plot at Green-Wood Cemetery.57 I have not found any references to the S. McFadden Company after this date so I presume the company died with “Uncle Jimmy” Harrison. No. 198 Hudson Street ceased to exist in 1926 (see Appendix 2).

Levi Hitchcock Harrison died on 17 January 1930 at age 70 in New York City and was buried three days later alongside his brothers in the McFadden plot at Green-Wood Cemetery.58
Appendix 1:
The Green-Wood Cemetery
500 5th Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.
Lot 25495, section 146

Front inscription:

JULIA McFADDEN
1780–1847

SARAH ANN McFADDEN
1808–1904

BLESSSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART
FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

McFADDEN
Front foot stone:

MOTHER
BROTHER

Side inscription:

ROBERT
DIED MAY 7, 1851
AGED 43 YRS.
—
SARAH M.
DIED AUGUST 5, 1858
AGED 63 YRS.

Note: George Robert McFadden, Sarah Ann McFadden’s brother.

Reverse:

ROBERT E. HARRISON
DIED AUGUST 8, 1886
AGED 39 YEARS

JAMES W. HARRISON, JR.
1850–1920

LEVI HITCHCOCK HARRISON
1861–1930

Note: Robert E. Harrison, brother to James W. and Levi H., is recorded in the Manhattan Death records as having died 18 August 1886, age 29. He was interred on 20 August 1886.
Side inscription:

JENNIE
HARRISON
1860–1954

Note: Jennie Harrison, wife of Levi Hitchcock Harrison.

Footstone:

ELIZA

Interred in the lot of her sister, Sarah A. McFadden, a small granite stone to the back right of the central monument.

Note: Obituary—Eliza W. Merritt, New York Herald, issue 303, 30 October 1890, p. 1. Interment on 31 October 1890.
Separate Gravestone:

THEODORE SEARLE LENT
1872–1904

BABY RUTH

Separate gravestone:

ENTERED INTO REST
MAY 12, 1890
LEVI HITCHCOCK,
AGED 87 YEARS.

“GREEN BE THE TURF
ABOVE THEE
FRIEND OF MY EARLY
DAYS.”


The records of Green-Wood Cemetery (www.green-wood.com) state the burial dates of the above people as follows:

20 August 1886 Robert E. Harrison ....... Grave # Not Cited
17 September 1886 Julia McFadden............. Grave # Not Cited
17 September 1886 George R. McFadden..... Grave # Not Cited
17 September 1886  Sarah M. McFadden ...... Grave # Not Cited
14 May 1890     Levi Hitchcock .............. Grave # Not Cited
31 October 1890 Eliza W. Merritt .............. Grave # Not Cited
6 April 1902    Lent, Child of C. E........ Grave # 2
2 April 1904    Theodore S. Lent .......... Grave # 2
24 August 1904  Sarah A. McFadden ...... Grave # 5
9 December 1920 James W. Harrison, Jr. ... Grave # 1
20 January 1930 Levi H. Harrison .......... Grave # RRC
29 November 1954 Jennie Harrison .......... Grave # RRC

In addition, Lot 10975, Section 117 contains a grave that may be related but more research is needed. That lot contains:

3 April 1886    Anna Harrison.............. Grave # 882
4 March 1899    James Harrison .......... Grave # 882

Photos of the stone on this lot are not presently available through Find-A-Grave, but a request for them has been made.
Appendix 2

198 Hudson Street

No. 198 Hudson Street formerly stood opposite Desbrosses Street, a few doors below Canal Street, in what is today the Tribeca District of New York City. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this area was designated as the 5th Ward, First Assembly District. The building was reportedly built in 1800.

Figure appendix 2a. In 1834, nos. 169 and 171 Hudson Street stood at the junction of Desbrosses Street on the left side of Hudson Street, meaning 172 stood on the right side of the street. Number 177 was the last on the left at the junction of Canal Street, which means 178 stood on the right-side corner. By my estimate what later became number 198 was number 174 in 1834. The houses were renumbered in 1844. Source: Thomas Longworth (ed.), Longworth’s American Almanac, New-York Register, and City Directory (New York: Longworth, 1834), 15.

Figure appendix 2b. The 5th Ward, New York City, in 1833. Source: Detail of Hooker’s New Pocket Plan of the City of New York Compiled & Surveyed by William Hooker, Engraver (New York, 1833).

Today, the block that formerly included number 198 has one building designated as number 200 Hudson Street, that was built in 1926. It is a large twelve-story, multi-use facility located on a lot that is under one acre, with offices, a performance space, a café, and a seventy-seat theater. From 2008 to 2013 it housed the 92Y Tribeca Arts Center, an offshoot of the 92nd Street YMHA/YWHA.
The Tribeca District takes its name from the acronym TriBeCa, for *Triangle Below Canal Street*. Coined in the mid-1970s as the result of City Planning studies and the adoption of a Special Lower Manhattan Mixed Use District, the Tribeca name came to be applied to the area south of Canal Street, between Broadway and West Street, extending south to Vesey Street, which is larger than the zoning district.

During the early nineteenth century, Trinity Church prompted the expansion of the city northward on its landholdings in the area that is now the district by laying out streets and establishing St. John’s Chapel in Hudson Square (later renamed for the chapel) in 1803. An elegant residential neighborhood developed around the perimeter of this private park during the 1820s. Collister Street was initially an alley which served stables at the rear of town houses facing the park. The narrow through-the-block lots which extend from Laight Street to Vestry Street are also reminders of this first period of urbanization.

The Hudson River shoreline developed around this same time, as landfill extended the perimeter of lower Manhattan to West Street. During the mid-nineteenth century, the Hudson River wharves began to serve coastal and trans-Atlantic shipping lines and the railroads as Manhattan terminals for rail lines that terminated in New Jersey. The waterfront area of what is now Tribeca became known as “The Farm,” an epithet which recognized its role as the receiving site of much of the food consumed in Manhattan, a function which continued through the early twentieth century.

The character of the district was altered during the twentieth century with the construction of the Holland Tunnel during the 1920s and the demolition of the St. John’s Freight Terminal in 1936, the site of which became the Holland Tunnel Exit Plaza.

The historical development of the Tribeca District began with rapid residential and more limited commercial and industrial development along the Hudson River waterfront during the first decades of the nineteenth century. The redevelopment of this area around the turn of the century transformed it into the northern extension of the Washington Market wholesale food center and one of the warehouse districts serving the Hudson River piers. Later, garage and freight terminal buildings were erected in the district as motor transport began to serve the commercial operations in area. Minor twentieth-century changes have had little impact on the overall character of the district, which is dominated by turn-of-the-century commercial warehouses.
Early Development

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the area of the Tribeca District was open land crossed by a small stream, part of the large land grant to Trinity Church known as the “Church Farm.” Much of what is now the district was the farm Leonard Lispenard leased from the church, a portion of the larger area known as Lispenard Meadows. The Lispenard house (erected around 1740 and demolished around 1813) was located in what is now the street bed of Hudson Street, just south of the present-day Desbrosses Street.

Lispenard developed a brewery around 1750 near the current intersection of Greenwich and Watts Streets (also demolished around 1813). Greenwich Street, laid out as “First Street” in 1761, became the main thoroughfare along the west side of the island. Eventually it was renamed after its destination, Greenwich, the village which grew around—and in turn was named after—the mansion built by Admiral Sir Peter Warren.

In the area of the district, Greenwich Street was initially about seventy feet inland from the high-water mark of the Hudson River. Several actions taken by the Corporation of Trinity Church to develop its large land grant transformed the Lispenard Farm and the surrounding area into the 5th Ward of the city. In the midst of its farmlands beyond the reaches of the city, the church established St. John’s Chapel in 1803 and encouraged the development of a residential neighborhood near the church on land the corporation both leased and sold as lots. An impressive park, first known as Hudson Square and later as St. John’s Park, provided a suitable setting for the new church and, as a private enclave, prompted the development of a refined residential neighborhood surrounding it. (The location of the park corresponds to what is now the Holland Tunnel Exit Plaza.)

Through-the-block lots were laid out facing the park and, initially, long-term leases were granted which prescribed the height and materials of the residences to be built. The development of these lots was slow due to hindrances posed by the marshy topography of the area and by the restrictive covenants which accompanied the 99-year leases, and the lots were not sold and houses developed until the early 1820s. At the same time as the church and park were being planned, Trinity Church laid out, named, and ceded Hudson Street, Varick Street, and the cross streets in the area to the city. Hudson Street, laid out in 1797, was interrupted originally by the St. John’s Park square, although it soon formed the western edge of the park square; in 1808 the church ceded the portion of the street between North Moore Street and Christopher Street. The cross streets, from Harrison to Watts (within the boundaries of the Trinity
Church Farm), were deeded to the city in 1802. These streets were gradually regulated and graded, and by around 1830 they were paved. The cross streets were named after members of the Trinity Church vestry, which Vestry Street acknowledges as an entity. Hubert van Waggonen, Edward Laight, and Elias Desbrosses were prominent businessmen. John Watts, a leading public official, was the last royal recorder of the City of New York and later served in the New York assembly, in the Congress of the United States, and as a judge; his monument is a prominent feature in the Trinity churchyard on lower Broadway.

By around 1820 the area east of Greenwich Street had become residential with commercial services provided on Greenwich Street, while the area west of Greenwich Street developed as a mixed-use district where tradesmen lived close to their work.

During most of the second half of the nineteenth century the area of the district was a development backwater surrounded by more thriving areas—the Washington Market area to the south, the dry goods district to the east, and the area now known as SoHo to the north. Beginning in the early 1850s the area became a mixed commercial and tenement district. A local journalist noted that by 1893 the St. John’s Freight Terminal had “crushed the region utterly, so far as its fitness to be an abiding-place of polite society was concerned.” She reported that the residents of the St. John’s Park area were mainly Italians and some Germans, crowded into the “aristocratic houses” which had been built around the park. Many of the dwellings, converted into “cheap tenements,” had small provision stores on the ground floors and were occupied by longshoremen, laborers, and teamsters.

**Hudson Street**

Like the neighboring river, the street was named after English navigator, Henry Hudson. Hudson Street, between the present-day Duane and North Moore Streets, was laid out by the Trinity Church Corporation in 1797; it was extended from North Moore Street to Christopher Street in 1808.

In the 1820s elegant dwellings were built on the blockfronts of Hudson Street facing St. John’s Park. These residences were converted for use as tenements when the character of the area changed after the construction of the St. John’s Freight Terminal in the late 1860s.

**Desbrosses Street**

Desbrosses Street appears to have been initially laid out in the 1790s; it was named in 1794 after Elias Desbrosses (1718–1788), a prominent merchant
who served Trinity Church as vestryman from 1759 to 1770 and as warden from 1770 to 1778. An alderman during the 1760s, Desbrosses was one of the founders of the New York Chamber of Commerce, as well as its third president. Desbrosses Street, west of Greenwich Street, was ceded to the city by the Trinity Church Corporation in 1802 and extended to the east in 1808.
Flag Name: Advertising Cover
Size: 3.25" x 5.5"
Flag Date: 1861–1863
Details: c.1865, Advertising Cover, for Flag Maker Sarah McFadden, Extremely Fine.

This 3.25" x 5.5" postally unused cover, the face of which is completely taken up by an American flag design in red, white and blue, advertises Sarah McFadden, at 198 Hudson Street in New York. McFadden was a well known New York flag maker from 1853 to the end of the century, and the printing in the canton area states that she manufactures maritime and fancy flags, ensigns, jacks, pendants and signal flags. This cover is in excellent condition, the face being clean and free of writing. The back contains some pencil notations and a couple of mounting remnants. Overall an attractive cover and a great related item for the Flag Collector.

Auction: Early American, Rancho Santa Fe, CA
Auction Date: 10 February 2008
Auction Price: $1,100
Estimate: $400–$500
**Flag Name:** Advertising Cover

**Flag Date:** 1861–1863

**Notes:** http://www.sheaff-ephemera.com/list/advertising-covers/sarah-mcfadden-flag-maker.html “Illustrated advertising covers were a ubiquitous fact of life in the second half of the 19th century and well into the 20th century, the ‘junk mail’ of the day.”

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**Flag Name:** U.S. Ensign 38 Stars upgraded to 42 Stars

**Size:** 86” x 110”

**Flag Date:** 1876–1890 updated 1890

**Details:** This flag currently bears 42 five-pointed stars, but the placement of four of the stars in between the rows of stars along the hoist edge make it likely that this was originally a 38 star flag which was then later modified, perhaps by McFadden, but more likely by the owner to accommodate the admission of the 39th, 40th, 41st, and 42nd states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington in 1889.

The exact history of this flag is unknown; but, eventually, it became part of the acclaimed collection belonging to noted antique dealer Mr. Boleslaw


Flag Name: Marine Trade U.S. Ensign

Size: 84” x 132”

Flag Date: c.1870

Details: Rare, Indian Peace Flag, circa 1850 with 13 hand-sewn inset linen stars arching above a spread winged shield crested eagle holding arrows and an olive branch on a machine sewn piece worsted wool navy canton. Eye of eagle created with applied piping and black linen, canvas hoist with 5 brass grommets and stamped with an American spread winged eagle. “8x12/S McFadden & Co., Makers 138 (?) Hudson Street, NY.” Machine sewn fly, 132” long x 84” wide. Though the evidence is anecdotal, these flags have traditionally been associated with the commemoration of treaties between the United States Government and sovereign Indian nations. According to Kohn, who cataloged the Connelly Collection of American Flags, only five are known to exist. **Comment by D. Martucci:** Much of the above catalog description is in error.

**Auction:** Boston Harbor Auctions, Boston, Massachusetts (www.liveauctioneers.com)

**Auction Date:** 13 April 2013

**Estimate:** $85,000–$95,000
Notes: Condition. Minor water stains primarily on canton, leaching of red on stars, small patches on fly, likely shortened by 1’. Bidding started at $75,000 but passed. S. McFadden & Co. existed c.1867–c.1890.

Flag Name: Marine Trade Decorative

Size: 76” x 115”

Flag Date: c.1870

Details: Civil War Era Maritime Flag, “Sarah McFadden’s design of an American eagle with patriotic shield with crescent of 13 stars is sewn through on a background of blue blended wool material. McFadden began making this pattern in the late 1850s and her design was used until the 20th century. Design is entirely hand-sewn, edges sewn with early machine. This flag is very similar to those found in many of James Bard’s Marine painting depicting 19th century paddle steamers. 115” wide x 76” tall. Blue has faded to a turquoise in field. Blue shield is still vivid as well as the red stripes. White cotton eagle soiled and patinated. A few old repairs and scattered holes are present.

Auction: Boston Harbor Auctions, Boston, Massachusetts (www.liveauctioneers.com)

Auction Date: 13 April 2013

Estimate: $85,000–$95,000

Notes: Bidding opened at $75,000 but passed.
Flag Name: New York Yacht Club

Size: 31.5” x 32”

Flag Date: c.1895

Details Description: New York Yacht Club burgee belonging to Commodore E. M. Brown. Purchased in June 2002 at Hartzell’s Auction of the Brown family estate. This sale also included the house flag of E. M. Brown from his steam yacht. It comes with the original shipping box from Hartzell’s Auction and the shipping label dated 06/11/2002.

History: Bears stamp of the S. McFadden Co. Makers, 198 Hudson St. N.Y. The venerable New York flag maker Sarah McFadden of S. McFadden Co., which occupied 198 Hudson Street, in lower Manhattan, for over 70 years, made this hand-sewn wool flag. According to contemporary accounts the company was a favorite of the Army, the Navy, the New York State Guard, the Sound Steamers, the Hudson Riverboats Companies and private yachtsmen. The S. McFadden & Co. was founded in 1834, and made flags of all types right into the early 20th century. The New York Times reported that Sally Ann McFadden, likely her mother or aunt, made and sold some of the first American flags produced in New York City; and in the 1890s was locally known as the Betsy Ross of New York. From the Hudson street shop the S. McFadden Co. advertised stock in the city directories of the day which included: National flags, Maritime Flags, Eagles, Jacks, Flags, Stands of Colors, Pendants, Bunting, as well as Marryats, Rogers and Commercial Signal Codes in the city directories of the day. They could also produce embroidered and painted Fancy flags on short notice.

Auction: Louis J. Dianni, LLC, Sunrise, Florida (www.liveauctioneers.com)

Auction Date: 16 February 2014

Auction Price: $400
**Estimate:** $100–$200


**Flag Name:** Royal Ulster Yacht Club

**Size:** 9' x 15.5'

**Flag Date:** c.1899

**Details:** Extremely rare original late 19th/early 20th century Royal Ulster Yacht Club pennant with painted and embroidered detail including the red hand of Ulster and Royal Crown; elements of their burgee. The bunting is marked R.U.Y.C. Royal Ulster Yacht Club was the sponsor club of Sir Thomas Lipton during his challenges for the America's Cup. The bunting is also marked “The S McFadden Co, makers, 198 Hudson St. New York.” Sir Thomas Lipton, the tea and grocery magnate raced for the America’s Cup five times, never winning. A story in the New York Times from 1899 details the events of the Lipton vessels and how they were adorned with national flags, Royal Ulster Yacht Club pennants and Lipton on private burgee. Flown from a topmast as it measures 15’5” x 9’. The flag does have some minor holes but is in great condition considering its age.

**Auction:** Boston Harbor Auctions, Boston, Massachusetts (www.liveauctioneers.com)

**Auction Date:** 10 November 2012

**Auction Price:** $3,000

**Estimate:** $3,000–$5,000
End Notes

1. Louis Annin was a ship chandler and sold and may have possibly made flags starting in the 1820s just a few blocks south of the location of this study, although Annin & Company was not incorporated until 1847. The evidence of Annin making flags before 1847 is sketchy, however.


3. A later record says she was born in Piermont, N.Y., which was unincorporated in 1780. The towns are on opposite sides of the Hudson River, with Tarrytown on the east shore and Piermont on the west shore, at the south end of the Tappan Zee.


5. The Green-Wood Cemetery, 500 5th Avenue, Brooklyn, New York, Lot 25495, section 146. See Appendix 1. Robert E. Harrison appears to have been the first interred on this lot on 20 August 1886, followed on 17 September 1886 by Julia McFadden, George Robert McFadden, and his wife Sarah M. McFadden. Likely the last three were reburials.


8. “To Stop Old Glory Waving,” The New York Tribune, 1 December 1894, part II, p. 13. Dix was New York’s Secretary of State at the time and was very busy organizing political infrastructure in New York City that later became known as Tammany Hall.

9. Ibid.

10. For example, see the 1900, 1910, and 1920 US Census Records for the 5th Ward of New York City (citations below).


12. The big fire in 1921 that destroyed nearly all of the 1890 Census Records also destroyed portions of many earlier Censuses. In addition, prior to 1870, all of the Censuses were subject to accusations of spotty recording.

14. Thomas Longworth, pub. and ed., Longworth’s American Almanac, New-York Register, and City Directory (New York: Longworth, 39 Pine St, 1834), 455. The Runner’s Vade Mecum, an appendix attached to this volume, says on p. 15 that number 177 stood on the left side of the street going north at the corner of Canal Street, which is either at or just above where number 198 was located.

15. Journal of Documents of the Board of Assistants of the City of New York, Vol. XXI 2 Nov. 1842–8 May 1843 (New York City, 1843), 193. Confirmation of the renumbering appears in The New York City Directory for 1844–1845 published by Charles Doggett, Jr., 1844. The New-York Street Directory appended to this volume, on page 9, indicates number 198 was on the right side of the street going north between Desbrosses and Canal. However, this edition lists Julia at 77 Hudson, between Anthony and Harrison, so the jury is still out on whether she continuously lived at what later became number 198. Additionally she is also listed at 174 Hudson in the 1839 Longworth’s Almanac and Directory.


22. Edward Hodges, ibid., 293. Also another resident of this building died as cited by *The New York Times* 12 August 1854, Lt. James S. McCabe, veteran of the Mexican War, who was, like the McFaddens, interred at Green-Wood Cemetery.


25. Levi Hitchcock is listed in the 1850 US Census as living in the 4th Ward in Maria P. Thompsen’s boarding house. It is interesting that he and James W. Harrison are both book binders and that James would later name one of his children after Hitchcock. Levi is buried in the same plot at Green-Wood Cemetery as Sarah Ann McFadden. See Appendix 1.


28. *Wilson’s Business Directory of New York City for 1865* (New York: John F. Trow, 52 Greene St., 1865), 175, lists “McFadden, Sarah, 198 Hudson” under Flag Makers while *Trow’s New York City Commercial Register for Year Ending May 1, 1868* (Vol. LXXXI, comp. H. Wilson; New York City: John F. Trow, 52 Greene St., 1867) has a display ad for “S. McFadden & Co.” The edition of the same title for year ending May 1, 1865, Vol. LXXVIII, published in 1864 has a display ad for “Sarah McFadden.” I have not yet located online copies of Volumes LXXIX or LXXX.


30. “United States Census, 1870,” database with images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M864-WN4, accessed 16 January 2016), Sarah McFadden, New York, United States; citing p. 6, family , NARA microfilm publication M593 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); FHL microfilm 552,515. This enumeration lists the location as being in the 6th Election District of the 5th Ward while the first enumeration lists the household in the 4th Election District. The designation and boundaries of New York City’s election districts were changed in September 1870.


34. See Appendix 1.


36. See Appendix 1.

37. This appears to be a modification of the opening verse of a poem by Fitz-Greene Halleck (1790–1867), an American poet notable for his satires and as one of the Knickerbocker Group. The poem is entitled “On the Death of Joseph Rodman Drake” and the opening lines are GREEN be the turf above thee! Friend of my better days!

38. The New York Sun, in an article entitled “A 60-Year-Old Encumbrance” reported 2 December 1894 that she “left the business to her nephews several years ago.”

39. The exact relationship between Sarah Ann and the Harrisons is not entirely clear. I theorize their mother Annie McQuire or McGuire was the daughter of one of Sarah Ann’s sisters, in which case they would be the fourth generation of McFaddens, as stated by The New York Times, “Sally McFadden Flagmaker,” 18 June 1899, op cit. I am still researching this relationship. It is interesting to note that the first Census to list the Harrison boys with Sarah Ann is also the first to list Eliza Merritt, her sister. Could Eliza have been the boys’ grandmother?

41. The address is 8 St. Luke’s Place. St. Luke’s Place is a block-long segment of LeRoy Street. Google it for details on why the address is not LeRoy Street.

42. See, for example, “Anti-Tammany Conventions,” The New York Daily Tribune, 3 October 1894 p.2.


45. Proceedings of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York from January 7 to March 26, 1895, Volume CCXVII, 1895, pp. 234–235. The resolution was introduced by Alderman Thomas Dwyer of the 8th Assembly District on 19 February 1895, p. 202. 198 Hudson Street was in the 1st Assembly District.


51. Real Estate Transfers, The New York Times, 7 August 1904. The transaction is described as “LE ROY ST, w s, 167.1 ft e of Hudson St, 21.8x100; Sarah A. McFadden to Catharine E. Harrison . . . $1.”

52. The two homes at 1117–1119 East Capitol Street SE were built in 1900 so it is unlikely Sarah McFadden went to that address in the late nineteenth century. Catherine E. Lent purchased two lots in Congress Heights in 1905 but that neighborhood is located far south of this address.


59. “Sons Arrive in New York,” Boston Evening Transcript, 26 June 1914, p. 13. A strange assertion since this section of Hudson Street was not laid out until 1808. See “Hudson Street” below.

60. Thomas Longworth, pub. and ed., Longworth’s American Almanac, New-York Register, and City Directory (New York: Longworth, 39 Pine St, 1834), Runner’s Vade Mecum, an appendix attached to this volume, p. 15.


63. In 1914 a plaque was placed into the façade of 198 Hudson Street commemorating this fact. See “Family Banner of’76 Aids In tribute to Washington,” The New York Tribune, 26 June 1914. See also The Twentieth Annual Report, 1915, of the American Scenic and Preservation Society (Albany, N.Y.; J.B. Lyon Co.; 1915), 105.